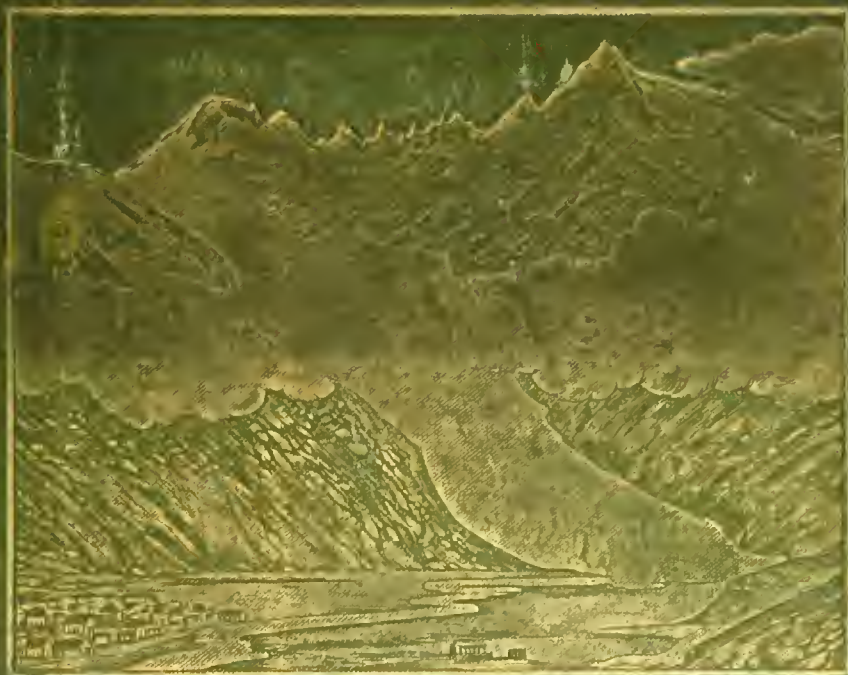


# IN THE VALLEY OF THE RHONE

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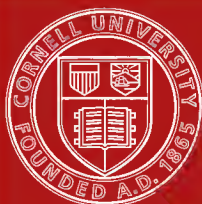
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IN THE VALLEY OF  
THE RHONE







CELL OF THE MAN WITH THE IRON MASK: AVIONON.





# IN THE VALLEY OF THE RHONE

BY

CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S.

AUTHOR OF

"LETTERS FROM MAJORCA,"

ETC., ETC.

WITH EIGHTY-EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS.

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TO THE MEMORY  
OF MY DEAR AND FAITHFUL FRIEND,  
FELICIA MARY FRANCES SKENE,  
ONE OF THE NOBLEST OF WOMEN,  
WHO WAS HERSELF BORN IN PROVENCE,  
WITHIN SOUND OF THE RHONE,  
AND WHOSE INTEREST IN THESE PAGES WHEN APPEARING IN  
SERIAL FORM WAS SO EARNEST AND KINDLY,  
**I Dedicate this Book.**

“Noiseless falls the foot of Time  
That only treads on flowers.”

*Spenser.*

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# IN THE VALLEY OF THE RHONE.

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## CHAPTER I.

Montreux—On the platform—H. C. indignant—"Every country has its morals"—Obliging barber—*Before* and *After*—An earthly paradise—Mendelssohn and Jean-Jacques—Rapacious flower-women—A second Mark Tapley—Lucky mistake—From cloudland to dreamland—A new world—Dilemma—Friend in need—Observatory—The "Herr Baron"—Views and effects—Sunset over the Alps—Strange vision—H. C. disappears—Amusing notice—A quiet Sunday—White world—Invisible chimes—Music of the spheres—Coming back to the world—H. C. in pattens—Chillon—Historical past—Little old lady.

TWENTY-FOUR hours after leaving London the train steamed into Montreux. The few passengers who got out marched off rapidly, the train went on, and we were left on the platform alone.

"If you are bound for Caux, you have descended too soon," said the civil station-master. "You ought to have gone on to Territet. There is not another train for two hours and more."

The train we had just left was not yet out of sight.

"Signal to put it back," said H. C., as though the world belonged to him. "You have no right to have two stations of the same name. Who was to know that *Territet* was the station for Caux when our tickets distinctly state Montreux? How far off is it?"

"Calm yourself, monsieur," returned the station-master sympathetically; "excitement is bad for the nerves. Your tickets say Montreux-Territet, not simply Montreux. But

the misfortune is not great. You are not at the North Pole—and I don't think Mr. Nansen will get there either, but that's as may be. Territet is only eight minutes by tramway. You may take it, and your luggage can follow by the next train."

This seemed good advice. We even thought we would devote an hour or two to Montreux, before going on. After a twenty-four hours' journey, however, the outer man needed attention.

"Is there an hotel close by, where we could debarrass ourselves of the dust and smoke of your vile engines?" asked H. C. of the station-master.

"Ah, monsieur is right," replied the gold-braided functionary. "I am always preaching wisdom to the company; telling them to consume their own smoke, or go in for electricity. They are deaf and stupid. I have seen people alight black as chimney-sweeps—enough to frighten you; monsieur is quite respectable by comparison. No; there is no hotel quite at hand. But just across the road—there, in front of you—is an excellent barber; a capital man with good rooms and a charming wife. The wife ornaments the ladies in one room, whilst the husband attends to the gentlemen in the other."

"An old-fashioned way of doing things, and quite a mistake," said H. C. "In London it is *vice versa*, and the rooms are always crowded."

The station-master shrugged his shoulders.

"Every country has its morals, monsieur. In France and Switzerland we are really particular; I have heard that in England you only pretend to be so. No one can answer for anything in these *fin de siècle* days."

This was heresy enough for one day, and we departed for the barber's, who was everything that was obliging, and placed himself and his establishment at our disposal. Presently we crossed over to the station to make sure our luggage was properly booked. The station-master lifted his hands in surprised admiration.

"It is the age of miracles," he cried. "If I could only put your photographs *Before* and *After* in front of the company we should have electric engines to-morrow."

We thanked him for his compliments and departed. He stood at the end of the platform, hat in hand: "Au plaisir, messieurs," his last words.

The situation of Montreux is delightful, a species of earthly paradise, below which stretch the lovely waters of the Lake of Geneva. Opposite rise the snow-capped Alps, the Dent du Midi amidst them. On our side, the hills rise above Montreux in terraced gardens, rich in vegetation, the fruit of the vine mingling with the blossom of the rose-tree, a delicious perfume scenting the air. Houses nestle far up the hill-sides; Swiss chalets with their painted roofs and overhanging eaves. Everywhere the eye is arrested by gorgeous creepers, and many a wall is a hanging garden of graceful, trailing leaves of vivid colouring.

But then we are in the Canton of Vaud, thought by many to be the loveliest part of Switzerland. And round about Montreux the walks and excursions are charming and endless.

"How exquisite are the secluded wood-paths!" wrote Mendelssohn, sensitive to the beautiful in Nature. "Of all the countries that I know, the loveliest is the Canton of Vaud! If God should grant me a long old age, there would I live. It is a sweet and wonderful country. In returning from Italy one feels almost moved to tears at the sight of this corner of the world."

"It is not only the hand of man that makes the strong contrasts of this lovely country," said Jean-Jacques Rousseau. "Nature seems placed in vivid opposition with herself, so striking are the contrasts in the same spot at different times and under different aspects. In the east we have the flowers of Spring; in the south those of Autumn; in the north, wintry snow and ice. She unites every season at the same moment, every climate in the same spot; contradictory results from the same soil: exhibiting at once a combination elsewhere unknown—the productions of the plains side by side with those of the Alpine mountains. To these wonders must be added innumerable optical illusions; the mountain-peaks standing out in every possible effect, the contrasts of sunshine and shadow, all the accidents and variations of light that repeat themselves night and morning."

All this is quite true. And round about Montreux itself, there is something specially attractive. One feels unconsciously exhilarated, hardly knowing why. There is a lightness about the whole place, which must be the most delightful of sojourns. Like Mendelssohn, we longed to take up our abode here: not for a life-time, but for days and weeks.

And yet the town itself has nothing out of the common. It is not full of ancient outlines, like Nuremberg, or Dantzic, or Vitré, but its streets and houses are modern and ordinary. Even here we begin to realise how much the Swiss are wanting in character and individuality. Yet somehow, everyone seems in a good temper; everyone appears to feel that to live is to be happy. It is a land without Black Mondays, where the daily round of duties is a recreation. People go to and fro with smiling faces, with hands full of fruit and flowers—productions that came down to us from Paradise; but the very flower-women unblushingly ask you ten sous for a buttonhole: a rose or a dozen violets: for which they would ask one sou from their next-door neighbour and make a profit. How different from the flower-women of Valencia, who for three or four sous give you more flowers than you can carry away!

But this greed of gain is the great drawback to Switzerland; takes from its charm and beauty, and runs through the country like an insidious evil. Every possible fraction is extracted from the visitor; it affects the whole working community, from the hotel keepers downwards, and is worse than the *backsheesh* of Egypt. But this "spoiling the stranger" has become a law to the people, fixed and unchangeable as the mountains.

Montreux, we have said, was an everyday place in appearance; its hilly streets are of yesterday and the ancient town has nearly all disappeared; here and there only we came upon a charming old-world bit to remind us of what once was. But all around are the wonderful mountains, and what more would you have, as you trace their reflections, cloud-wreathed, in the far-famed lake? On this first day, however, we saw no mountain-tops; they were buried in mist, the skies were grey and lowering, and rain had fallen in torrents. It ceased while we were in Montreux, only to begin again like a deluge when the tramcar landed us at Territet. The Grand Hotel was so

excellent that we felt tempted to go in for luxury and wait for fine weather. "But a watched-for visitor never comes," said H. C.; "we should wait for ever." And as we had booked our luggage to Caux, we heroically departed. Territet after all is only just above the lake; Caux is up on the mountains, and jaded nerves longed for mountain air.

A funicular railway takes you from Territet to Caux: a steep climb and a fine bit of engineering. But nothing is impossible in these days, and we may presently have a railway to the moon.

Glion is the first station, and here we changed trains. We imagined, somehow, that Caux was the terminus, and hence a blunder by which we eventually profited. The train stopped at Caux, nobody got out or in, no one called the name of the station, not a house was visible; the whole place was shrouded in mist, rain was still falling, and a damp, cold, creepy atmosphere penetrated the carriage. Only H. C., who loves to dwell in the clouds, felt in his element, and wrapping his martial cloak about him, declared that life was worth living. For the time being he was a second Mark Tapley.

"That looks very much like our traps going off," he suddenly remarked, peering through the mist and the rain.

"Hardly probable," we returned. "All bags are alike in these days."

"But no one has got out," he wisely objected. "Bags don't go about by themselves for change of air or in search of the picturesque."

Just then the train moved on. The climb seemed to grow more and more steep; the engine puffed and snorted through the elements, keeping up an incessant grumble at the hard work. This went on for a long time, and we seemed to be getting far above the world, though always in mist and rain: cloudland.

"Caux is a long way off," said H. C. sarcastically, a suspicious ring in his voice which plainly said, "I told you so;" but he waited for the event, and it did not tarry. Again the train stopped: this time at a small roadside shanty: a mere platform without shelter. "Caux at last," we said, and got out.

Nobody else moved. It was very funny.

"Glued to their seats, or asphyxiated by the mountain air," cried the sarcastic H. C.

"Where is the luggage?" we asked the guard, who seemed as fixed as the passengers.

"Whose luggage?" he returned.



HOTEL AND STATION, ROCHERS DE NAYE: OBSERVATORY IN BACKGROUND.

"Ours, naturally. Two Gladstone bags, two hat-boxes, and a case belonging to H. C. with reams of paper for writing poetry."

"Why, that was all put out at Caux," said the guard, revealing a helpless state of things. The miserable platform was still in cloudland and a deluge.

"What is to be done?" asked H. C.

"You must stay here till the next down-train. That will not be for some hours."

"In the mist and the rain? No shelter? no food? no Lafitte?"

"They don't keep choice wine-cellars up here," laughed the guard; "and as nobody stops here, food and shelter would be wasted on the air."

"Is there no alternative?"

"Certainly—a very good one. You had better go right up to the Rochers de Naye. I was there this morning, all was in brilliant sunshine, and you will find a capital hotel; food, Lafitte, everything you could wish for."

We returned to our seats, the guard closed the door, and the train went on.

It was now evident why the other passengers were immovable: they were simply taking an excursion beyond cloudland to the Rochers de Naye. We had never heard of the Rochers de Naye; had no idea this railway had been extended to the mountain-top, with telegraphs, telephones, a post-office and a luxurious hotel above the clouds.

The train puffed on, for it was almost like going up the side of a house. It seemed that the journey would never end. Seven thousand feet above the sea?—we thought it must be seven thousand miles. Presently, in the midst of clouds, heavy rain and depressing gloom, we entered a tunnel, changing gloom for pitch darkness. This went on for a time, and we reappeared in Dreamland. Mist and rain had disappeared, there was not a cloud in the sky, the sun was warm and dazzling.

The transformation was magical. Here we were in summer; down at Caux and Montreux it was still winter. We looked out, saw the clouds below us, and had never experienced so curious a sensation. The train was on a level with the snow-tops of the mountains, glittering in the sunshine, a wonderful forest of peaks. In a sheltered spot stood the hotel, large, substantial, a reality. A hundred yards above it was the highest point of all, from which, as it were, you commanded the world.

On leaving the train, we felt that wings had been given to

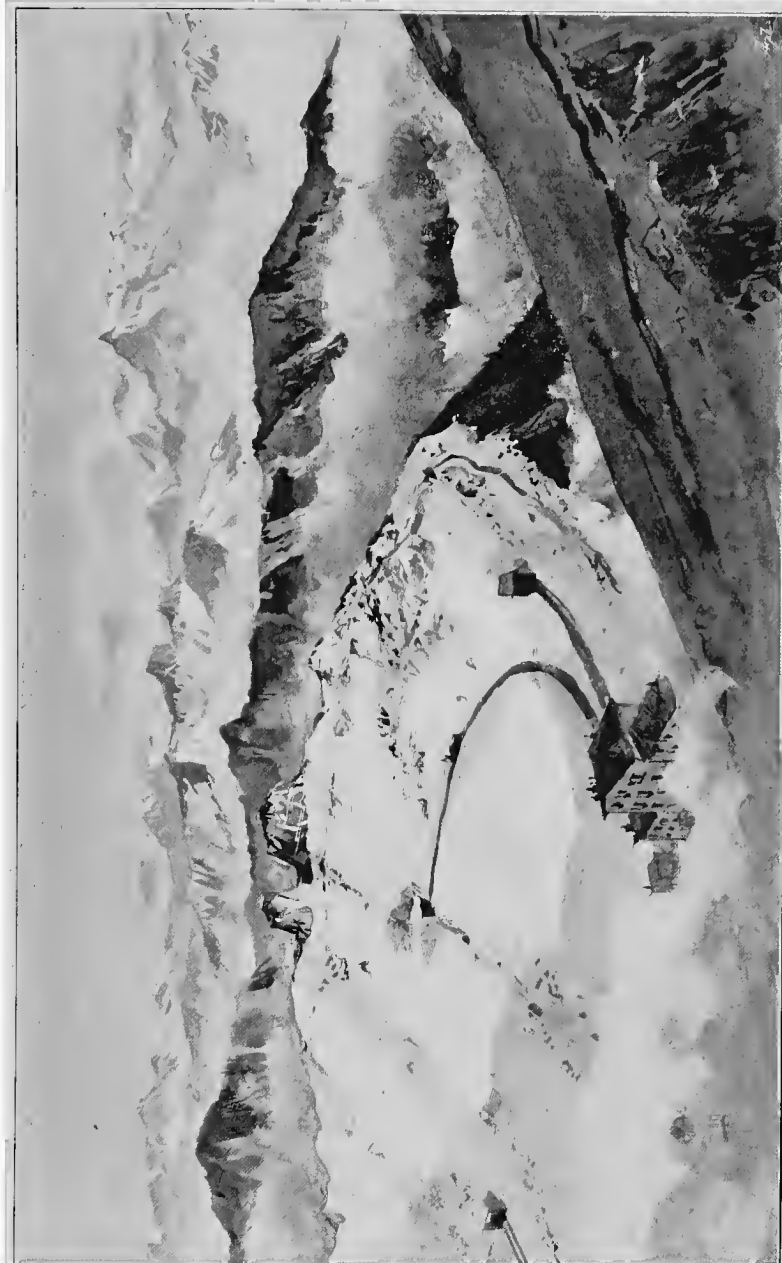
us. The air was a revelation and a new experience. The asphyxiated passengers came back to life, and tumbled out pêle-mêle as the train steamed up to the little station, which is also a post-office. The letters written here must have a celestial ring about them.

All the passengers at once made for the highest point, following each other in a long string, like turkeys in a farmyard, their outlines—curious and grotesque, you may be sure—strongly marked against the white snow. It was a perfectly white world, pure and beautiful.

But we were now in a dilemma. No sooner had we touched ground and breathed the air than we felt there could be no returning that day—yet our luggage had been put out at Caux. H. C. had been practical for once, though literally in cloudland. We sought the manager and explained the difficulty. Never was manager so agreeable and obliging. Everything we needed he would lend us. He would telephone to Caux. There would be another train that evening, if there were any more passengers to bring up. People often came by it, stayed the night, got up early next morning for the sunrise, and went back by the first train. If the train arrived it should bring the luggage; failing that, it would come up by the first train in the morning. For the next day was Sunday; and we felt that a quiet Sunday up here, out of the world, near the skies, above the clouds of earth, figuratively and literally, would be worth its weight in gold.

So, comforted, we followed the turkey-string of excursionists who were now on the uppermost platform, which may as well be called the Observatory. Only a handful of people after all; perhaps thirty; a black, excited, gesticulating group, thrown into strong contrast by the white snow and the blue sky.

The handful of people were making a great Babel, for they were chiefly French, Swiss, and Germans, who are not of those that take things quietly. One German carried three photographic machines: one in each hand, one slung across his shoulders: the last a "binocular." He cultivated the severely military in aspect, tone and expression, and his companion, many years older than himself, addressed him as "Herr Baron." Everything was photographed from every point of view, and when there was nothing else left, he took his friend four times over;



ROCHERS DE NAYE.



back view, front view, and both profiles. This happened when the rest of the passengers had filed down again. We thought him eccentric. First he glared at us ; then came up and asked if he might have the honour of taking us also. We declined as civilly as we could, and he evidently thought we were refusing a good offer. Finally he too departed, leaving us alone on the mountain-top. They were all returning by the train, these human turkeys, leaving us in quiet possession.

But the view ! Without shouting and gesticulating like the rest of the little crowd, we were none the less impressed. We gazed over vast valleys. They were invisible, it is true, but we knew they were there. Below us was the region of cloudland ; impenetrable vapours, rolling and moving and changing form every moment : it seemed a thick, dense curtain that seemed capable of sustaining us. Over and over again the desire seized us to hurl ourselves into the yawning abyss of clouds, where we should alight upon a soft and downy substance and float deliciously for ever and for ever. It was impossible to realise that one could fall through that opaque mass and meet death on the way.

Far down was the lake of Geneva, and from the lake all this world of mist was rising. Around us far and near were the snow-peaks stretching to the skies, the wonderful Alpine ranges. The clouds wreathed about them in every fantastic form, veiling and unveiling. It seemed that we only were above cloudland. Most of the famous peaks were there : Mont Blanc, Tête Noire, Aiguille Verte, Wetterhorn, Matterhorn, Dent du Midi : all caught in a group as it were ; majestic, overpowering. And though some of the peaks were seven thousand feet and more above our present elevation, yet we almost seemed on a level with them.

As the day went on to evening and sunset, the fantastic beauty of the scene was beyond description. The sun went down into the mist, and the mountain-peaks turned rosy red. The sky behind them was everything from pale rose to deep azure : colours that melted into each other. Then the clouds rose out of the abyss and crept upwards and wreathed about until they swept past us in torrents of vapour.

It is impossible to conceive the wonders of evaporation without

seeing them. We are going through creations—destructions—convulsions of nature—earthquakes; fairy lands appear and disappear with breathless rapidity; pile upon pile of mountains, forming, spreading, narrowing; yawning chasms opening and closing; unfathomable depths spread out before one: all changing with the rapidity of thought. It is magic-land on a gigantic scale: the return of chaos. All this is unseen by those who live below the clouds and find above them only the dull, smooth, grey surface, the dismal, unbroken pall that is shutting out the sunshine. But once above cloudland, once admitted into the secret manner in which the great magician works—the wonderful sun—and we declare that few things on earth—or above it—are so grand, so beautiful, and so sublime, as this process of evaporation.

All this and much more we saw: and next occurred a strange phenomenon: strange to us unacquainted with mountain-tops and the mysteries of their world. We had our backs to the sun. Suddenly in front of us appeared a great prismatic oval frame in which we saw ourselves distinctly reflected; diaphanous, intangible. The effect was startling and uncanny. For once we gazed upon our own ghosts and wondered whether they were our astral bodies. Could this rarefied air separate the spiritual from the material? And if so, where were our astral bodies bound for? What voyage of discovery? Mars or Venus? H. C. no doubt would make direct for the latter.

The vision gradually faded, just as ghosts fade away. We have seen them ourselves at midnight in distant cathedrals. We saw them when Quasimodo was charming all our material senses to sleep in Tarragona, and nothing but the spiritual part of us was awake and alert.

The effect was so strange on this mountain-top, the vision so beautiful with all its rainbow hues, that as it faded we called to it to come back and gladden our eyes yet a little. It was deaf to entreaty. We waited, hoping it would return. It did so in about four minutes, but this time was fainter and more shadowy, as though the astrals had gone far on their journey and were approaching the planets. Only a moment's vision was vouchsafed, and then all was over: almost more beautiful



RHÔNE GLACIER.



and effective for its fleeting nature. Though understanding how the effect was produced, in that first moment we would not examine into causes, preferring to accept the supernatural.

We turned to the sun. As it sank it seemed to create confusion and consternation in the clouds. To him they owed their life, and they rebelled at his disappearance. There seemed a perfect convulsion going on amongst them; they tossed and rolled and crept round the hills, their motion rapid as it was fantastic.

Then suddenly, literally in a flash of time, they utterly disappeared and Geneva's lake was spread out before us in all its glory; the sun still above the horizon gleaming upon its surface. We could just discern a steamer ploughing the waters, no larger than a fly upon a wall. The whole thing was a dream-world; a land of enchantment; anything but the ordinary earth on which we lived and moved. We had never felt so much in another state of existence: the experience of sleeping hours come to life and reality. Even the people of the hotel said it was exceptional. And it seemed as though the mist had cleared merely to give us that marvellous view, for it lasted about one minute only. Then vapours and clouds wreathed and tore up from the lake, and quickly as they had disappeared, so the whole vast valley once more filled with cloudland.

The beauties of the afterglow in the sky and on the mountains were beyond all imagining; snow-peaks retained their flush, and the heavens were a deep dark azure, out of which the stars came by-and-by like trembling points of silver.

Before this we had watched the human turkeys re-enter the train waiting for them just beyond the hotel, the Herr Baron with his three cameras stepping in with his military air and fierce moustache. Not a creature remained behind. Then the whistle shrieked—a strange sound up in these mountain regions—and the train began to serpentine through the snow until it entered the tunnel with another shriek, and we saw it no more. When it issued out of that tunnel it would have returned to cloudland and the earth, the mist and the rain. We watched the afterglow as long as we could: as long as circulation kept going. When it stopped we felt it was time to go down, though the cold air was so light and delicious that we were loth to

leave it. We had never breathed anything so exhilarating and health-restoring.

H. C. made a short cut downwards and tobogganed over the hard snow at the speed of an express train. Near the end of the slope, not far from the hotel, he suddenly disappeared paralysing one with fear and horror. A patch of soft snow had let him in. We had visions of a funeral, a Dead March in Saul, a great poet's life cut short, agonising telegrams to heart broken parents, sensational paper-paragraphs; Lady Maria living just long enough to make another will; and last, but not least, our blighted holiday. But in a moment he reappeared on the surface like a Jack-in-the-box, a black object upon the white snow, suggestive of imps and the lower regions: then frantically waved his hat to intimate that he was none the worse for his trip into the earth, and would encourage us to do likewise. We unparalysed and went down by the path; it was less adventurous, but slow and sure.

There were no more passengers that night, and the last train did not run; so we had to do without our luggage, and the manager came to the rescue. We found the hotel far more comfortable than one had any right to expect seven thousand feet above the world. Instead of starvation fare there was abundant excellence. The rooms were admirable, and the views from the windows over the mountain ranges would have atoned for any amount of shortcomings.

There was no sunrise the next morning, and so the waiter did not wake us at five o'clock, according to orders. "He thought it a pity to disturb us, as there was nothing to see." And yet when we did get up, the sun shone so brilliantly that we wondered whether the man had overslept himself and taken refuge in philanthropy. We never knew.

A notice in our room was amusing. "Visitors at the hotel are begged not to take the blankets off their beds when they get up to see the sunrise: the portier having special blankets for the occasion." One imagined the graceful procession of people of all ages and dimensions starting on their pilgrimage to the top, struggling in all stages of *déshabille*, one following another, wrapped in blankets over head and ears! Could these unpicturesque people be lovers of the beautiful in Nature?



ON THE LAKE OF GENEVA.



It would be difficult to forget that quiet Sunday at the Rochers de Naye.

We had the whole morning to ourselves up to the arrival of the first train towards mid-day. All clouds had disappeared. We climbed to the Observatory. The view was magnificent and sublime—no adjective would express the reality. To-day everything was visible, and the air so rarefied that everything seemed near.

Now we saw what vast precipices we overlooked ; how, if we had hurled ourselves into cloudland yesterday, we should not have floated on for ever in realms Elysian, but met sudden death in some yawning crevice, or on the point of some jutting rock. Far down, like a dream, stretched Geneva's fair lake flashing warm in the sunshine, a white-winged boat upon its surface looking like a small toy, the houses on its borders just discernible. Everything down there was green and summer-like, and far up the mountain-slopes were sunny nooks where fir-trees grew and chalets nestled.

But up here we were in a white world. The sun shining upon the snow was dazzling. The whole range of mountain-peaks rose pure and bridal-like towards the sky, blue, calm, holy as we had never felt it before. We traced the upper valley of the Rhône ; imagined we could just discern the far-off Glacier, where the famous river finds its source. It was Sunday, but every day spent in such delicious solitude must be a Sabbath of rest and peace. There was no church here made by hands, and none was needed ; we were in the centre of a vast celestial temple, and seemed very close to the portals of heaven itself. There were no clashing peals to irritate with their incessant clang, but if we listened attentively, rising out of the depths and across the chasms, all about the mountain-slopes we heard the sweetest, softest stealing of invisible bells ; chimes belonging to paradise. We heard them distinctly, and the air was full of their melody. It is an illusion peculiar to mountain-tops, the centre of the wide ocean, all vast solitudes. We have heard it over and over again, this music of the spheres, and to us this morning its song was praise for the beauties of earth.

We had some hours of this wonderful solitude ; but

presently, far down we saw the little train creeping about the hills like an insidious serpent approaching to disturb one's rest.

It came at last and disgorged its fifty passengers who were taking their Sunday excursion ; had come up for déjeuner, to see the view, and return in the afternoon. The train brought our luggage also.

The day went on, and so did our love for these enchanted regions. The air was so wonderful that already we felt capable of jumping over the moon, and agreeing that a few days here would be more than well spent, made up our minds accordingly. Even if we left a few things undone at the other end of our wanderings, it was worth the cost.

"We shall be charmed if you remain," said the amiable manager. "We have had a wretched season ; day after day nothing but rain, hence nothing but weeping and wailing on account of *mauvaises affaires*. But the Swiss, you know, have always a little reserve fund to draw upon."

That we did not doubt ; and we saw no signs of poverty and privation as we went through the land.

But we had reckoned without our host, represented on this occasion by the weather. It remained splendid throughout the whole day, the sunset gorgeous, the mountain peaks and slopes wearing their loveliest rose-tint ; everything was calm, beautiful and serene, including the distant lake ; the sun went down behind the hills, a golden ball ; far on into the night the after-glow remained.

Again we had it all to ourselves. The little train had gone back with its load ; the world was left to us and darkness ; or rather a long drawn-out twilight and after-glow. It seemed impossible to leave the Observatory for such vulgar considerations as dinner ; and only when the bell had rung three times—the last time so frantically that we felt cook, manager and waiters were losing their senses—did we at last make up our minds to go down.

"You have been fortunate in the weather," said the manager, when we bade him good-night. "We have not had so fine a Sunday throughout the whole summer. Such a day up here is worth a Jew's ransom. I really think we are

going to have our été de St. Michel. Bonne nuit, messieurs. Dormez bien."

"To-morrow morning wake us without fail," we severely said to the porter, on whom the duty involved. "Sunrise or no sunrise, come to our room at five thirty."

"A votre service, monsieur," returned the subdued keeper of blankets, who felt that we saw through his philanthropy. Nevertheless he failed again, and this time with excuse. It



COURTYARD, CHILLON, WHERE THE PRISONERS WALKED.

was impossible to realise the change. The next morning everything was blotted out; not a mountain-top to be seen, not an inch of blue sky. A gale was blowing so strong and furious that outside we could not stand against it without holding on to something. Thick clouds drove fast and furious, hail and snow fell at express speed; we had never seen or felt anything like it. The whole air seemed possessed of legions of imps in their very worst mood. That such a yesterday could be

followed by such a to-day seemed the most incomprehensible wonder of all. The porter was freely forgiven for disobeying orders. "J'en étois sûr," he replied, in old-fashioned French, with a wise shake of the head. "A quoi bon l'intelligence si on ne s'en sert point?"

On going into the office, there was no need to ask for the bill. The manager placed it before us with a sad smile. "I knew you would leave," he said; "no one could stay in such weather. Yesterday I had hopes, but now I give it up. Yet it is so intensely furious, it may be short-lived. But snow has fallen in the night, and you might be snowed up," he frankly added. "It does happen sometimes."

We shuddered at the prospect, paid the bill, and declared our resolve, all being well, of returning next year for a longer sojourn. So fierce were the elements that one could hardly walk the ten yards to the train. With joy unspeakable, such as yesterday we could never have imagined we should feel on leaving these celestial regions, we heard the first puff of the engine and felt the first downward motion. It was an uncomfortable journey. All the gilt was taken off the ginger-bread; all the sunshine out of our sky.

"At least," said H. C. as we went down and down, "there is the comfortable feeling that we need have no doubt about the weather, and are not in an uncertain state of mind—worst of all states. Ah! here is Caux," as the train stopped in cloudland, and the guard sarcastically shouted the name in at the window. "On the whole I don't think we will get out here."

The train crept down to Glion, where the snow had given place to a deluge of rain. We changed trains, and as the car was open had the benefit of a free shower-bath. Territet was hailed as a City of Refuge.

As good fortune would have it, the rain ceased, though the clouds did not lift, and we decided on a short walk to Chillon in spite of muddy roads. Down here there was comparatively no wind; it was impossible to realise that round about the mountain-tops a furious gale was raging. The obliging chambermaid at the hotel offered to lend H. C. a pair of Swiss pattens; but the very first step he took in them he came down gracefully upon his nose—humiliating position for



CHILLON UNDER GREY SKIES.



a great poet—and they had to be declined with thanks—like a rejected MS.

We soon reached Chillon, most ancient and romantic, most historical and beautiful object on Lake Léman. It is in the neighbourhood of the high mountains, and the Dent du Midi stands near it across the water, in all its glory. One feels with melancholy satisfaction that at least the prisoners had the beauties of Nature to look upon and while away the lingering hours. The Castle has existed for centuries, yet little was said or sung about it before the days of Byron, whose name one meets at every turn.

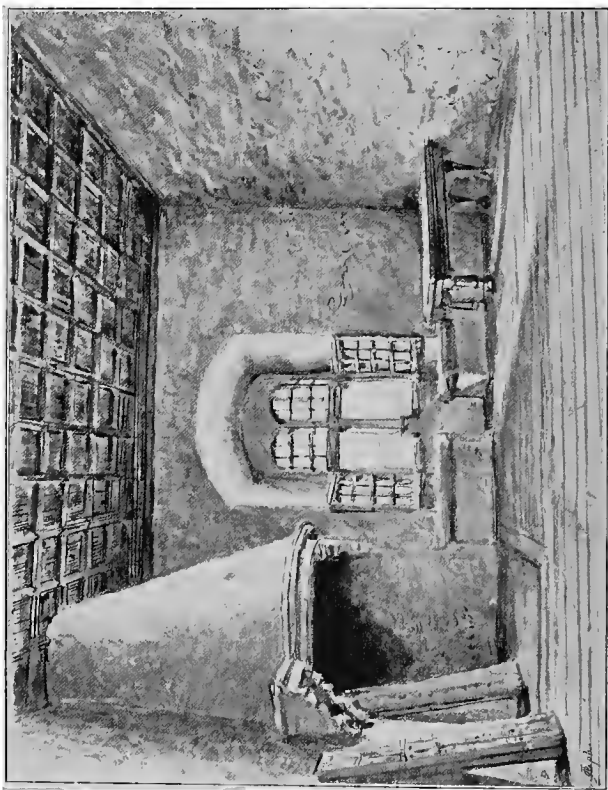
We soon reached the well-known outlines, and like everyone else were charmed. Chillon creeps into the heart, for its own sake as well as that of Bonivard. Not the only prisoner, indeed, for it has had numberless victims far more to be pitied than he; but only Bonivard found a Byron to immortalise his name: though after all, Byron's prisoner was more imaginary than real; more a type than an actual personage. And yet he very closely touched the truth.

Historically, we first hear of the Castle of Chillon in the year 830, and even then as a prison; a gloomy building, shut out from the world, where only sky, lake, and mountains could be seen. Here Louis-le-Débonnaire imprisoned Count Wala, Abbé of Corbie, for inciting Louis' sons to rebellion against him. Wala was cousin to Charlemagne, grandson to Charles-Martel, and was ambitious.

Chillon in those days was a small habitation, perched on the rock. In 1150 it belonged to the Bishop of Sion, who, possibly satisfied with his own magnificent stronghold, leased his Chillon property to the Counts of Savoy. In 1224 it passed into their possession; and in 1250 Count Peter of Savoy, "le petit Charlemagne," added to it, turning it into a strong fortress and a royal residence. When he died, it lost much of its importance as a residence, but was kept up as a fortress and a prison.

The Castle stands close to the road. A wooden bridge over the moat leads to the interior, where you find yourself in an atmosphere of the past. It now belongs to the Canton de Vaud, and has been restored by an Association. The place is

empty with the exception of a few old pieces of furniture and carved wood, seeming to indicate the commencement of a museum of antiquities. In spite of restoration the rooms are extremely interesting, with their enormous fireplaces, the ancient windows looking on to lake and mountain. One room, the smallest of all, was one of the most picturesque. It



DUCHESS'S ROOM.

was called the Duchess's room ; and if a duchess occupied it in the days of torture, many a prayer must have ascended heavenwards for the unhappy prisoners. Their lords might be hard and inhuman, but with a few exceptions the women were feminine and merciful.

In the torture-chamber one realised many a past horror.

Its centre was a wooden pillar seamed and scored by the hot iron too often used. One little old lady who went over it with us clasped her hands and shed tears as her imagination pictured the cruelties of the Middle Ages.

"Do you think such things happened?" she asked us. "Were men as barbarous as they are represented in the Middle Ages—those ages to which we owe everything that is beautiful and romantic? Monsieur, I trace my descent back to one of the unfortunate noblemen said to have perished on this beam. That is why I weep. Tell me, does not history exaggerate?"

What consolation could we give the beautiful little old lady with her white hair and distinguished face and bearing, who charmed us with her dove-like eyes and gentle voice and heart, and quiet graceful footsteps? How confess to an exaggeration we did not believe? "Madame," was all we could say, "whatever their sufferings, they bore them nobly."

This black beam, the *Potence*, was enormously massive and looked very terrible. Here the criminals, guilty or not guilty, were hung, until presently, living or dead, their bodies were shot through a hole in the wall into the waters of the lake, a hundred fathoms deep.

Most horrible of all was the *Oubliette*, its very name sufficiently suggestive. A trapdoor opened to a small, short spiral staircase, in pitch darkness. Down this the wretched prisoner walked, until the staircase coming to an end he was hurled eighty feet downwards, the body falling upon large knives pointed to receive it. Interesting above all is the dungeon of Bonivard, with its pillars and Gothic arches, which might almost be some lovely cathedral aisle; the most picturesque dungeon in existence, with its exquisite pillars, receding arches and groined roof. Once it was divided into small cells, but now all is thrown open. Here prisoners languish no more. We have fallen upon times of peace and mercy. Massacres, inquisitions, secret tortures, unholy captivities, are of the past.\*

Bonivard was a Prior of St. Victor; a Savoyard by birth, who had transferred his affections to Geneva, then going

\* The Dreyfus martyrdom had not come to light when these words were written.

through its religious crises. The times were out of joint, but momentous and intensely interesting. Farel was swaying Calvin, and Calvin was girding himself to the battle. Whatever Geneva is now, it has had great influence in its day, and seen great men. Such names as Calvin, Beza, Farel, D'Aubigné, Knox, Casaubon, Voltaire, Rousseau, Necker, Madame de Staël, Saussure, Bonnet, De Luc, De Candolle, Sismondi, and others, all rise before us in a great crowd at the mention of Geneva.

Bonivard loved it, and so made an enemy of Duke Charles, endeavouring to free Geneva from the yoke of Savoy. He was



BONIVARD'S DUNGEON.

seized and secretly imprisoned, but escaped at the end of two years. Again he was taken, and this time more carefully guarded. For six long years he languished in prison, part of the time chained to a pillar—like Lord Bateman in the ballad. That pillar now bears the names of Byron (said to be a forgery), of Shelley, Dumas, George Sand, Quinet, Dickens, Victor Hugo, Eugène Sue, Tartarin, and others, mutely protesting against tyranny.

The floor beneath the pillar is worn away with Bonivard's footsteps. Looking across his dungeon, through the small



CHILLON BY NIGHT: SHOWING THE DENT DU MIDI.



window he could just see a glimpse of blue sky, to remind him that Heaven was still over all. The first two years of his captivity were comparatively light; but the whole of the last four were spent in this dreary dungeon below the level of the lake. Then in 1536 came the conquest of Vaud by the Bernese. A thousand men under Nægeli besieged Chillon, firing upon it from the lake. Beaufort fled in a barque and the Castle yielded. Bonivard was released and taken in triumph to Geneva, where he lived honoured and useful until 1570, dying at the age of seventy-four. After his freedom the current of his life changed. He had begun life as a Roman Catholic of the interesting Renaissance period. During the six years of his captivity he must have pondered long and deeply upon all these things. Once free, he became a Protestant, working steadily for the cause. He was also very domesticated, and became the husband of four wives.

Few places with a reputation bear a visit better than Chillon. We linger about it, tracing its outlines from every point of view. We go down to the edge of the lake and are fascinated by its reflections. Whatever its past history, it now only suggests peace and repose, swords turned into pruning-hooks. We take a white-winged boat, and sail gently to and fro under the very shadow of the great mountains. Chillon stands firm as the ages, full of dignity and romance.

The air comes down to us, soft and caressing from the Upper Rhône Valley, that, not far off, opens with magnificent scenery. The river, gathering strength from the time it leaves the glacier, runs between the mountains, falls into the lake and falls out again near Geneva, flowing its unrivalled course to the Mediterranean: a broad, matchless stream, of which France may well be proud.

That morning we gazed in vain at the clouds for sign of parting and blue sky. It would not come. Yet we determined not to lose hope, and did well. In due course, there came such blue skies, sunshine and perfect air as we had never enjoyed: weather that gilded the after hours and turned the world into a paradise.

## CHAPTER II.

Little old lady again—"A cruel world"—St. Maurice—Bruno, the St. Bernard—Old Hermitage—A fallen abbey—Poor convent but rich treasure—Famous bridge and tower—Centenarian keeper—Bruno protests—Chapel of Véroille—Remarkable valley—Falls of Salanfe—Gorges du Trient—Great storm—Dull waiting-room—Approaching Sion—Striking view—Singular town—Substantial charms—Inflexible landlord—H. C. inspired—Interesting remains—The broad Rhône—Historical hostess—Tower of the Sorcerers—Ancient ruins—Castle of Tourbillon—A Druid altar—The Goat-woman—Monotonous existence—Janon—Martigny and the *Cheval Blanc*—Paradise.

OUR walk back to Montreux was silent, for the beauties of Nature were all hidden, and it was difficult to shake off the impression of that terrible *oubliette*. All the past had risen before us in vivid colouring at the very aspect of that spiral staircase. Far below, in imagination, we saw the pointed knives, red tipped with the blood of victims, flashing with a thousand cruel gleams.

Close to our hotel we came upon the little old lady who had gone over the Castle with us. She still looked pale and subdued.

"Ah, monsieur, it is a cruel world," she said, as we bowed and stopped involuntarily. "How is it that Christianity, whose motto is Love, has not done more for the human heart? How desperately wicked it must be, when even the Divine power is so slow to reach it! Oh, that *oubliette*!" placing her hand before her eyes. "I see it all before me, and shall never forget it. I hear the groans of my poor ancestor, and see his despair. It was a double murder, for his beautiful young wife survived him only one short year. We have this on undoubted tradition. She died of grief, and who can wonder?"

She was a very charming and beautiful old lady, full of grace and sympathy.



A BIT OF OLD MONTREUX.



"Are you staying at the Grand Hotel?" she asked. "If so, will you find me out this evening, and we will talk about those old days. I have read and thought so much about them that they seem to belong to me. And from indirect and private sources I am in possession of so many incidents unknown to the world."

But, alas, we were leaving that very day, and the old lady's knowledge and experience must remain for ever unrecorded. Yet we intended to return to Montreux, and perhaps we might meet again.

"Ah, no," she replied. "The day after to-morrow I return to France, to my château in Ardèche. And at my age one never knows what may happen from one year to another. Time is for the young; for the old there remains only Eternity. Adieu, monsieur; perhaps we shall meet again in a land where there will be no *oubliettes*—nothing but Charity."

She gave us her small delicate hand, and with a curtsey that would have done honour to the court of Marie Antoinette, took her leave.

Before long we found ourselves in the train bound for Sion, where we expected to find many old-world traces and outlines.

Soon after leaving Montreux, we passed away from the lake and entered the wide, marshy Upper Valley of the Rhône, with its splendid mountains, through which the river flows, a broad, beautiful stream, the Dent du Midi ever in sight. The whole district is full of interesting points and excursions, and many weeks may be profitably spent in exploring the neighbourhood.

The train went on to St. Maurice, where we had three hours to wait for the train to Sion; time that could be well employed in seeing the old town. At the buffet they gave us an excellent small luncheon, and took charge of our hand-baggage. Here they have St. Bernard dogs for sale, and no sooner had we left the station than one of them darted out of his kennel on the opposite side of the road, and insisted upon making our acquaintance.

This was best done by returning to the buffet and purchasing sundry delicacies which made him our friend for ever. He was

of the smooth-haired tribe, such as they have at the Hospice in the mountains. We told him we intended to pay a visit to his old home, and are convinced that he understood us, for the tears came into his eyes and he wagged his tail sadly. Then he distinctly told us that he was for sale, and asked us to buy him.

"My name is Bruno and my price is only 200 francs," he said; "surely not much for so noble an animal."

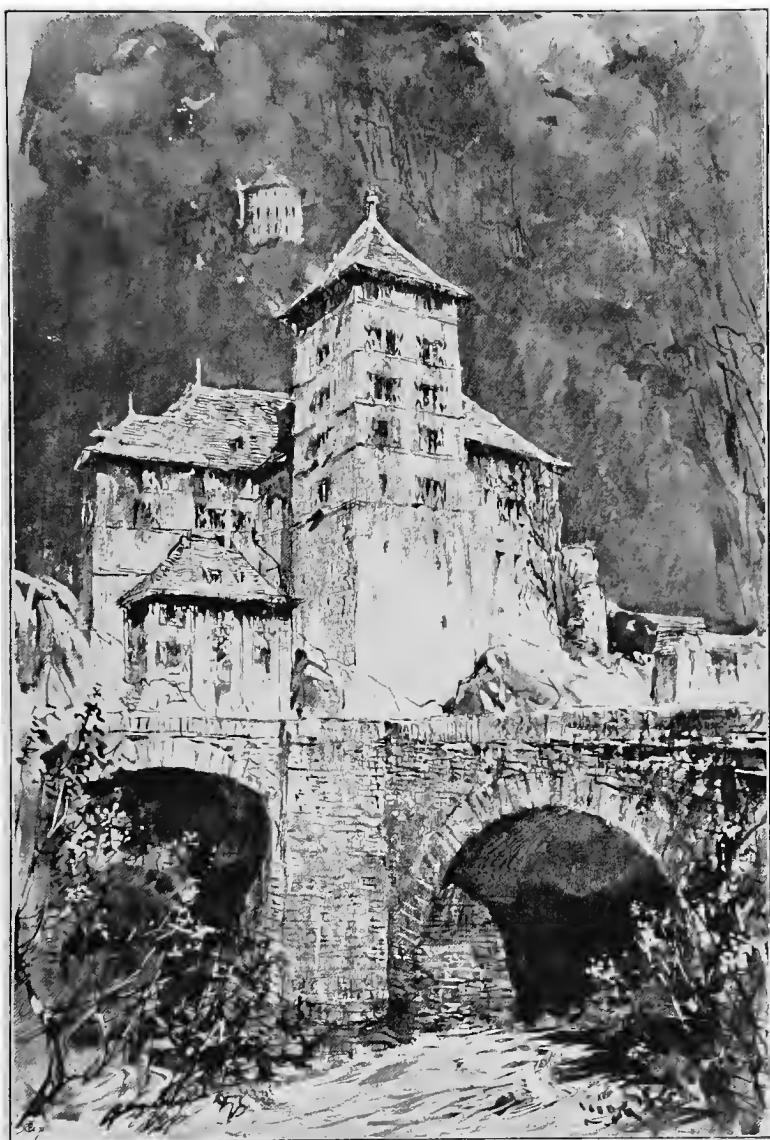
We replied that we had once all but lost our life by one of his species, who was base enough to attack and nearly kill his master—the hand that fed and housed him, and asked him what he had to say to it.

He returned that there were bad people in the human world, could we expect that there were no bad dogs in its canine section? If we would buy him he would make it up to us by a double amount of affection and fidelity. All this was clearly expressed by the eyes and the tail: large, beautiful eyes, full of amiability and good temper. We promised to consider the matter, and the wistful gaze followed us down the long avenue leading to the town.

St. Maurice proved interesting in many ways, its situation very romantic. The broad river runs rapidly between high banks full of picturesque beauty, and at the far end rises that magnificent snow-clad mountain, the Grand Combin. An ancient bridge spans the stream, guarded by a wonderful old tower that once protected the pass from the enemy: the famous bridge of St. Maurice, with a single bold arch 72 feet wide, that finds its deep reflections in the waters below. Above it, nestling on the hill-side, is the small hermitage of Notre-Dame-du-Sex, on an apparently inaccessible precipice.

The town itself is not much more than a village, and seems given up to the hard-working poor. Many of the houses are old, quaint and curious, but this morning everything felt the want of sunshine—the skies were still grey and lowering. Here once stood the Roman Agaunum, and the name of the place is taken from the Theban legion under St. Maurice, who was here martyred by Maximian, in the year 302.

The Abbey is of course its great monumental attraction, though little but the tower remains of the once ancient building.



BRIDGE AND TOWER OF ST. MAURICE.



The church, which has been vilely restored, inside and out, is the oldest Christian building in the Alps, having been founded in the fourth century by Theodule, first bishop of the Valais. In 515 it was rebuilt by Sigismund King of Burgundy, and became one of the most famous abbeys in Europe. In 824 Louis, son of Charlemagne, gave it to secular canons; and in 1128 it came into possession of Augustinian monks, who still hold it; a small, quiet fraternity. The Abbots are consecrated as Bishops of Bethlehem.

It is now a very poor convent dependent upon the Pope, but the treasury contains some interesting relics: a cameo chalice of antique Greek art; a vase of Saracenic workmanship, said to have been given by Charlemagne, but really of much later date; a gold crozier in the shape of a spire, with niches filled with small, elaborately worked figures—and, perhaps most interesting of all, the chalice of Queen Bertha. There is a rich MS. of the Gospels, also said to have been given by Charlemagne. The Abbey archives are extremely rich and valuable, but closed to students. The tower bears several Roman inscriptions, and so do the churchyard walls.

The famous bridge seems to join the two great mountain chains: on the east side the Dent de Morcles, on the west the Dent du Midi: a scene strangely beautiful and striking. The broad river winds far down the valley; the mountain sides are wild and rugged, or covered with trees and verdure of soft luxuriance: the home of abundant wild flowers. Here the botanist would find himself in a paradise of plants.

The bridge has been given a Roman origin, but was built by a Bishop of Sion who flourished in the fifteenth century, and its dark grey stones can boast no greater age. It joins the two interesting cantons of Vaud and Valais, which here meet in friendly union.

The tower or fortress stands out magnificently with its background of precipitous mountain slope, looking both ways of the world, and once effectually guarding the passage. The gateway it controlled has been removed—we have outlived the feudal times of warfare when every man bristled with quills for the benefit of his neighbour. Yet how interesting and picturesque they were, those feudal times, to which we owe so much!

Standing in the very centre of the bridge, the rushing river makes delicious music; a torrent suggestive of strength and swift moving life; suggestive also of infinite repose, for it goes on its course and nothing ruffles or disturbs the deep serenity of its bosom. It travels in one broad unbroken sheet, reflecting



ST. MAURICE.

the grey clouds of stormy days or the blue of summer skies. The little town sleeps on its banks, and church spire and abbey tower rise above the quaint roofs and outlines of the houses. In the distance, like a dream-mountain, rises the snow-clad Grand Combin.

Time was when the Augustinian monks must have enjoyed their favoured retreat. They possessed power and wealth by

which the years rolled on smoothly, to their infinite satisfaction, and they made their own laws and received the world's homage. But now the very silence of the place seems to read its lesson. Even the swift river flowing to the sea told its story as we stood on the bridge and looked down upon it. The ancient tower has passed into peaceful keeping. An upper window opened, and a hoary-headed man with a long grey beard leaned out and surveyed us. He might have been a century old.

"Father Time himself; or perhaps the river god in human form," said H. C.

"Pan without his pipes, which he has left in the reeds and the rushes by the river. Who are you?" we asked of this strange apparition. "Man or spirit, angel or demon?"

The old man writhed and gurgled.

"I am the keeper of the tower," he said, "and I have grown old in doing nothing. No, I am not yet a hundred; but for all that I was alive when the century was born, and if it please Heaven, shall be here when it dies. I am one of the monks of the hermitage, but can't live up there; so I live here in the tower, and my small pay helps the brotherhood. Oh, I have seen changes in my century; helped to build the fortifications which have become so much lost labour. I love this place. At night I lie awake and listen to the rush of the flowing water and the sighing of the wind in the trees. It all tells the same story: a story confirmed by my long white beard. Oh, the day is grey and the skies are dull! I wish you good-day, sirs, and bon voyage."

And with that he disappeared and the casement was closed.

We had lingered long enough, and made our way back to the station. Here we hired a small carriage to take us on to the next station: an arrangement that would permit of our visiting the famous *Gorges du Trient*. It was a small conveyance drawn by a strong horse and driven by an excellent man. The pity of it that we did not hire him for all our drives!—but we will not anticipate.

We got into this conveyance close by our friend, the St. Bernard, who saw us depart with a bark of anguish, tugged at his chain, and we thought would have broken loose. The bark distinctly said: "Don't leave me behind—take me with you!"

But we could not travel through the Rhône Valley with such an encumbrance, and the bark still ringing in our ears we bade the driver go faster.

It had been raining again in torrents, but now ceased ; we had the hood thrown back, and once there was actually a gleam of sunshine.

Just beyond St. Maurice on the right we passed the chapel of Véroille, with some rude, half-effaced frescoes, where St. Maurice was martyred. His followers shared the same fate to the number of 6000. It is 1600 years ago now, but there are deeds that defy time, living on for ever in the memory of succeeding generations.

Opposite the chapel, on the other side the river, are the baths of Lavey, much frequented by people of all nations, containing the hottest water in Switzerland. Far above it lies the village of Morcles, with its magnificent views over the Rhône Valley. From this, in five hours you may reach the Dent de Morcles ; and if you do not mind the discomfort of a night amidst freezing snow-peaks, may watch all the changes of sunrise and sunset as they are not to be seen on the lower planes of earth.

Journeying onwards we found the valley infinitely beautiful. The river kept us faithful company with its rushing music, and the way was every now and then diversified by a quaint and sleepy village. But we were in the Valais canton, and the character of the people had changed to a much finer and more pleasing type. Men, women and children were all good-looking ; the men apparently industrious, the women neat and tidy. Cheerfulness distinguished them, though they are said to be very poor. Cattle grazed in the plains and up the mountain sides ; sometimes standing half-buried in the picturesque watery marshes, where they could just swish their tails as they gazed with gratification upon their own sweet reflections. The mountain slopes were very fertile. High up on dizzy heights was many a summer alm, where the goats and cattle pass the hot months of the year ; and towards evening, listening attentively, you may hear the Swiss jodel ring out on the sparkling air, calling the cattle home. There they remain, these herds, week after week, never coming down into the world.

This is a land of waterfalls, and presently, where the valley somewhat narrows, we came in sight of the famous fall of Salanfe : a striking object in the scenery ; the volume of water great after the heavy rains. It is an almost perpendicular fall of some 300 feet : a snow-white contrast to the green mountain slopes.

A little beyond we came to the Gorges du Trient, where we left the carriage for a time, the gatekeeper coming forward to offer his services. Of course the admission was by payment, like everything else in this enterprising country.

It was well worth a visit. The narrow gorge wound about in sharp curves, a wooden passage or gallery running between the gigantic rocks, bold and naked, towering upwards. Over its rocky bed the torrent of water froths and foams, and the noise is deafening, the scene wild and grand. For about half a mile one follows the gallery, but the water rushes through the inaccessible chasm for a distance of five or six miles, and one longs to follow it to the end. Of course the gallery ceases at the most picturesque moment, where for a space the chasm widens and the water spreads into a hundred miniature falls. Wild ferns grow in small crevices in the rocks, where no hand can pluck them. The sky appears above the narrow opening ; a long strip of zigzag blue when the sun shines, but to-day grey and gloomy.

Our passage was not the easiest in the world. Water fell upon us from the overhanging sides, so that it occasionally resembled a mild shower-bath ; and spray dashed up from beneath as the torrent poured onwards, whirling and eddying round great boulders worn smooth by its action.

We got back to the gate, which the man had left open for us ; locked it, and returned him back the key, as he presided over his stalls, which contained the usual curiosities that no one came to buy. The season was over, and if there were any late travellers about, the weather had frightened them away. It was only such hardened explorers as ourselves that no weather daunted.

When we left the rush and thunder of that torrent walk, and got back to the open world, the clouds were lower than ever, and the deluge had begun again. Our driver, enveloped

in a long cloak, had put up his hood, which ended in a peak, like the Matterhorn, only black instead of white. Down this the water ran like another fall. The poor horse looked drowned, hung its head and drooped its ears. The carriage hood was now also up, and we squeezed ourselves in with running streams pouring from every angle. The rain dashed upon the ground and rushed down the road, and splashed up in a thousand small fountains. The flood-gates of heaven seemed to have been let loose, and all the landscape was blotted out. It was the clearing shower, though we knew it not.

"This is delightful," said H. C., advancing his head an inch beyond the hood, upon which a cataract immediately ran down his nose. "I like things to be in earnest. The heaviest rain I ever saw in my life, and quite refreshing."

Luckily we had not far to go, or the horse would have ended by swimming. At Vernayaz, we were to take train for Sion. Often have we wondered since whether the driver got safely back to St. Maurice or was drowned on the way. We were nearly drowned in our struggles to emerge from the hood to the station; and our time had been so well economised that we had more than half an hour to wait for the train. We spent it in contemplating the wreck of the station-master's garden through the glass windows: late roses and other sweet-smelling flowers beaten down by the storm.

Presently up came the train, and released us from captivity. What can be more dreary and depressing than these road-side stations in wet weather? The country people came in with their streaming umbrellas and deluged market baskets and noisy pattens—such as had brought H. C. to grief at the hotel—and the little shelter was soon in possession of an unpleasantly humid crowd.

So we hailed the train, though, like everything else, it looked half drowned when it reached the platform.

We were no sooner seated than the rain suddenly ceased—and ceased for good. By the time we reached Sion the mists were rolling away from the mountains, the clouds were rapidly lifting. As we approached the town, its bold, magnificent situation was conspicuous. The castles crowned their separate heights, a series of wonderful feudal and mediæval outlines.

We had expected all this of Sion, and were not to be disappointed. After our late deluge it was delightful to leave the train in almost sunshine. There was no omnibus at the station, but the porter of the Hôtel du Midi attended in solitary state. He had not even brought a truck for luggage.

"I was very nearly not coming at all," said he. "Who could expect travellers in such weather? But I will leave the luggage here, attend ces messieurs to the hotel, and return for it."

We set out up the country road or avenue which led to the town, and on our way passed a large new hotel in course of construction. Our guide sighed deeply as he looked upon the progressing walls; a sigh easily interpreted.

"That will be a formidable rival to the Hôtel du Midi," we observed.

"Alas, yes," he answered with dejected countenance. "This hotel will be modern and fashionable; we naturally have stood still, and are old and old-fashioned."

"Old-fashioned things are often the best," we hazarded by way of consolation.

He shook his head.

"That is true," he answered, "but you cannot make the world believe it. People like novelty. They are shortsighted and judge from the surface. So when this opens next year we must redouble our efforts—or close the shutters."

On reaching the town, we thought it one of the funniest places we had ever seen; half town, half village; the streets full of droves of cattle, half of which seemed to be making it their home. Each animal wore a bell, and we felt we had suddenly entered Pandemonium.

The outside of the hotel was certainly not promising. It looked anything but clean, and a close narrow passage gave one a very unfavourable impression. Yet it proved better than its appearance, and the people, kindly and attentive, were worthy of better surroundings. The passages were all dark and narrow, and there was only one large room at our disposal, but as it contained four beds that were fairly lost in space, we had plenty of breathing-room. Here everything was clean and comfortable, and the dining-room left little to be desired. The menu was

liberal, and because we passed various things that are better avoided—such as pork cutlets and rich bœuf à la mode—the bill of fare was really overweighted—they were hospitably anxious to supply us with other dishes in their place.

The women who waited upon us belonged to the hotel, though we never discovered whether they were sisters, cousins or aunts of the establishment. The day we left they were at the railway station, escorting departing friends, and were dressed like great ladies in flounces and furbelows and towering hats and feathers: altogether a vision of feminine charms. Like their menu, too, they were substantial.

But the laws of the hotel were those of the Medes and Persians—not to be broken. At ten o'clock at night, for instance, when we were diligently writing letters for the next day's post, there came a knock at the door, and in marched one of the substantial ladies. She was very sorry, but *le Patron* was about to turn off the gas, and we should be in darkness. She had the honour of bringing us candles. If the President of the Republic himself came, *le Patron* would turn off the gas at ten o'clock—not a moment later.

We learn in travelling through the world to take things as we find them, and, like the Scotch, adapt ourselves to circumstances; so we accepted the candles and assured the substantial vision that her attentions were appreciated; whilst H. C. with a polite bow and a sentimental sigh declared that where she carried the sunshine of her eyes, other lights were unnecessary. He would have the pleasure of writing a sonnet to her eyebrows. The substantial vision gave a mystified bow and withdrew.

But we must go back to the first moments of our arrival, and take things in their order.

Having settled ourselves at the hotel we went out to reconnoitre. The afternoon was growing old and daylight would soon fade. We found the town a curious old place, full of contradictory outlines and elements: old and new blended together in strange juxtaposition, a want of cleanliness distinguishing streets and houses. Over all there was a more or less poverty-stricken appearance. And the town is poor and the people are poor, though Sion is the capital of the Valais canton.



SION.



The entire department indeed is one of the poorest in Switzerland, and one of the most interesting. The name is taken from the river Sionne, on which it is built, a small stream of which little is seen. The history of the town goes far back. The see dates from the fourth century, and the bishops took up their fixed abode at Sion about the year 580. In the tenth century Rudolph III. King of Burgundy made the bishops Counts of the Valais, and they were largely concerned in the political affairs of the country, especially taking part against the House of Savoy. These bishops rose to great power throughout Europe. Their Swiss men-at-arms became famous for their fighting powers, and made every country wish for their alliance.

In the town itself few signs of past greatness remain, and at a first glance there seems to be little to repay a visit. The streets are badly built and badly paved, and you scarcely see anywhere a decently dressed person. The people themselves are not interesting or good-looking—it was more in the villages of the Valais that we noted an improvement in this respect. There was no trace of costume anywhere.

But we found here and there some wonderfully interesting bits of architecture; traces of mediæval times. Quaint houses with curious roofs, pepperbox turrets, latticed windows and overhanging eaves disclosed themselves to the vision at the sudden turning of a street or an adventurous plunge into a dark alley. We began our inspection with a feeling of disappointment, and ended by deciding that Sion was not to be overlooked, though a place for a short visit only. Its dirty and poverty-stricken appearance is depressing, and the hotel was not good enough to dispel outside influences.

Before the evening closed in, we went down to the Rhône, which runs in a broad splendid sheet under the shadow of the hills. The clouds had cleared and an exquisite evening light lay upon its surface, here crossed by a great iron bridge.

Country people driving mules and carrying loads wished us "Good-night" after their manner. The light declined and the sun went down, and the mediæval castles stood out in softened outlines. These alone should make a visit to Sion imperative.

Nothing, indeed, could be more romantic and picturesque in

the twilight than the old town, with its castle-crowned hills rising above the houses, all surrounded and closed in by chains of mountains. We had crossed the bridge, and between us and the old-world vision ran the rapid stream, overshadowed by the



AN OLD CORNER IN SION.

luxuriant slopes of Conthey and a portion of the Mont Blanc chain.

The next morning rose cloudless, a hot and brilliant sunshine turning autumn into summer: the atmosphere so sparkling and rarefied that the most minute objects in the

landscape stood out boldly and clearly. It seemed too much like paradise to last; but it did last.

Before going out we interviewed madame at the hotel: a stout, amiable, energetic woman dressed in working costume, much less dazzling than her daughters—if daughters they were. We found her surrounded by market women, bargaining for poultry, fruit and vegetables, and having her way in everything. In her small sphere, she was as despotic as the bishops in the mediæval ages; but she was evidently just and kindly withal, and the women were as evidently glad to accept her terms.

“Madame, you are hard,” said a vendor of six fine capons. “I never knew you budge an inch for all the praying in the world.”

“Not hard, Eulalie,” returned madame, “but just, and sometimes even generous. My prices pay you well, or you would not come to me time after time. If I were not a careful housewife I should soon have to shut up my hotel—and where would you be then?”

“Santa Maria!” cried the poultry-woman, crossing herself; “the heavens forbid such a calamity. Yes, it is better to sell at a small profit than not sell at all. At least I have bread, if I have to go without cheese.”

“Allez!” cried madame, laughing. “You needn’t play the hypocrite with me. I know you to be thrifty and economical—and even rich, and will wager no one in the whole canton of the Valais has a warmer stocking in the chimney corner than you.”

The bargains were over and the women trooped away one after the other, chattering like a flock of magpies. Madame turned to us.

“You have brought us fine weather, monsieur. The whole summer has been wet and disastrous. This is almost our first summer day. Pray that it may last. We shall yet save the vendange—they are just beginning to gather the grapes. A good harvest makes so much difference to the prosperity of the country. What thought you of Sion in your promenade of yesterday?”

We expressed a certain amount of disappointment: the

poverty-stricken appearance of the town; its want of cleanliness; a commonplace modern atmosphere predominating over the mediæval outlines.

"What would you?" returned madame. "No town in Switzerland has suffered so much at the hands of men. She has been pillaged or burnt eight times. The wonder is that a single trace of the Middle Ages remains. But it is profoundly ancient; its origin, indeed, is unknown. It was once a small, straggling Celtic village or market town, as is proved by the number of ancient arms and utensils of every description discovered by digging deep in the gravel heaps accumulated by countless inundations. You will find in your walks this morning the remains of a Druidical altar on the east side of the Valère, that hill crowned by the wonderful old church. I am not learned," smiled madame, "but I am told that Cæsar in his Commentaries mentions the inhabitants of Sedunum, the ancient Latin name for Sion, and asserts that its people were Celtic Gauls who had emigrated into the Valais. His lieutenant Galba conquered them; and Augustus conferred upon them the title of Roman citizens. So we are of respectable antiquity."

"And you are quite a respectable lecturer, madame."

"Oh, no," she laughed. "But I will go on with my story, since I am wound up. In 302, as monsieur knows, Maximian, in passing from Gaul to Italy, ordered the massacre of the Theban Legion, who refused to sacrifice to the pagan gods." The blood of six thousand martyrs ran through the country, but not in vain, for from that time Christianity took a firm root amongst us: and St. Theodule, first Bishop of the Valais, founded the Abbey church of St. Maurice as a tomb for the bones of the martyrs. In 580 the Valais passed from the Bourguignons to the Franks. Charlemagne did much for the Abbé of St. Maurice, but his sons allowed Rodolph, son of Conrad d'Auxerre, to take the Valais from them and found the second kingdom of Burgundy. The Bishop of Sion largely helped him to keep his throne, and out of gratitude he left the country of Valais to his chancellor.

"The Rodolphian race became extinct, and in 1033 the Valais passed to the Emperors of Germany. I don't like the



CASTLE RUINS.



Germans," said madame in an aside. "They are proud, avaricious, and unscrupulous. Though I am not French, I can never forgive them for Alsace and Lorraine. But that is not to the point. From the Germans it passed to the House of Savoy. Bishop Armanfroi in those days was the greatest that Sion ever possessed. He assisted at the crowning of Philippe I. of France, crowned William King of England, presided at the Councils of Lisieux, Winchester and others.

"Then in the twelfth century began all that long series of strifes and tumults, between the patriots, the nobles, the House of Savoy, and the Bishops of Sion: strifes that had no end. Nobles were massacred; a bishop was thrown out of window by his nephew, who paid dearly for his treachery. So it went on more or less for ages until the Reformation in 1603, when by popular decree the Roman Catholic religion was established in the Valais. Out of our five thousand and more inhabitants in Sion alone, only about three hundred are Protestants.

"We had peace in the land until 1790, when there came a revolution. In 1798 the French arrived; Sion resisted; but they took the capital and pillaged it. In 1800 Napoleon, when First Consul, crossed the St. Bernard at the head of 30,000 men. Two years later the Valais was declared a free State; then was united to France under the name of the Department of the Simplon; and in 1815 finally became the 20th Canton of the Swiss Confederation. There, Monsieur, you have it all."

"Madame, you are quite an historian," we said, after listening in patience to the epitome.

"Oh," she laughed, "I have told you all I know. If you question me further I should be lost. I repeat very much like a parrot that has learned its lesson; or a cathedral suisse who recounts his tale time after time and knows no more and no less, and is confused by the least question and put out by the smallest interruption. All the same, at school I always took the prize for history. And now you will go out and see Sion under this brilliant sunshine. Since 1831 it has lost nearly all traces of the Middle Ages. Gates and walls have fallen, ramparts have disappeared, moats are filled in. And I must to my domestic avocations. If the hand looses the

helm the ship drifts. Do what I will, I can never absent myself from my ménage for ten minutes with impunity. Une bonne promenade, messieurs !”

The sunshine was indeed brilliant and the skies blue as we made our way up the uneven streets, which looked less forbidding than they did last night. We came to a curious old tower, one of the remnants of the past, standing alone, and found it was called the Tower of the Sorcerers, where, in the



SORCERERS' TOWER.

Middle Ages, all who were accused of witchcraft were imprisoned until they were burnt or set free. It was a very picturesque object, with its round white walls, small windows and black turreted roof. Turning from this to the main street, a narrow winding road gradually took us up to the Mont de Valère, where, crowning the height, we found the church, and the ruins of the old castle, Sion's ancient fortress and stronghold.

The surrounding view was magnificent. In the plain and

on the hill-sides reposed the town, more picturesque and interesting from this point, where its old roofs were in evidence, than from any other. Beyond it stretched the broad, magnificent Rhône, and on all sides rose the Alpine mountains. Here and there in the vineyards the grapes were being gathered in the sunshine. The harvest was late and could not be abundant, yet would by no means be the failure they had dreaded.

Through the crumbling ruins we passed up to the church, of considerable interest and many periods; certain fragments of the exterior east end pointing to the eighth or ninth century. The choir and chapels are tenth century, and the nave belongs to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Much of it is of the very earliest Gothic.

Before the tenth century this was the cathedral church of Sion. In the fortress the Chapter kept its archives and rich library; here was the arsenal, guarding the treasury; here the bishops and canons took refuge in times of war. No stranger was allowed to enter without permission. Any one arriving was admitted between the first and second gateways; the sentry sounded his bugle, and the drawbridge was only lowered after keen scrutiny and close questioning.

In the belfry the keeper showed us the mill for grinding corn, used in times of siege; also some long narrow stone shoots or channels, down which they hurled the stone balls upon the enemy: very different fighting from these torpedo and maxim days!

To the east of the church we found the old Druid altar, to which our historian at the hotel had referred. Here the emigrant Celts pursued their strange rites, and hollows in the rocks still remain where they offered their sacrifices, excavations for holding the blood of the victims.

On another rocky height not far off were the ruins of the Castle of Tourbillon, dating back to unknown times, but rebuilt in 1294 by Bishop Boniface de Challand. The whole was burnt down in the last great fire and outbreak of 1788, and in the flames perished the priceless archives and the portraits of all the Bishops of Sion, which had been carefully treasured in one of the castle halls. Nothing remains but the exterior

walls. From this point the view is even more extensive. The Alps surround one like a gigantic colosseum, the Beitshorn conspicuous. The whole Valley of the Rhône may be traced from the Viege to the Dranse: the great northern chain of hills follow, from the Feldum to the Scex-rouge. Most beautiful is the stream reflecting the blue skies which gives its name to the marvellous valley. Here and there, even with the naked eye, in this rarefied atmosphere one sees crowning a hill or reposing on a slope many a ruined feudal castle.

Near the old church on the Valère a woman was tending her goats. She knitted to pass the time, and every now and then gave a sort of short jodel chant by which she recalled those erring members of her flock that seemed disposed for adventure.

"It is a monotonous existence," she said in answer to a question, "but I have to do it. I employ my spare moments in knitting for my human flock, and in the cold winter days when the goats cannot come up here, when snow is on the ground and avalanches are falling all over the country, I work at home. Oui, monsieur, my goats all have names. Which shall I call for you?"

We pointed to the farthest off. "You have chosen my favourite," said the woman. Then she called "Janon! Janon!" adding her peculiar jodel, and up came the goat at the sound of its name and stood beside its keeper.

"They are all the same," she said, stroking the little black and white animal. "Goats are supposed to be stupid, but I find them intelligent. They are obstinate sometimes, and want their own way, but so do human beings when they can get it."

A little way off some half dozen people were gathering grapes in a vineyard, bright spots in the landscape as they moved to and fro and threw the bunches into their baskets.

"Would that work not pay you better?" we asked, pointing to the gatherers.

"Les vendanges, monsieur? My husband is amongst them: he with the red sleeves, you see. That is his work; I have mine here. I am not strong enough to gather the grapes. It breaks my back."

In truth she looked a frail delicate woman, with a white

sensitive face and deep blue eyes suspiciously clear and lustrous.

We left her to her knitting and her goats, and went our way back to the town. That afternoon we packed up and departed; for it was only a flying visit that we were paying Sion.

"Far too short a visit, monsieur," said our historical landlady, as Jules the porter placed our bags on his hand-truck. "You will have to come again, for there is much in our neighbourhood worth seeing."

"Alas," said Jules, as we passed the hotel in course of erection, "*that* will probably be open the next time you come, monsieur, and then I expect it will be good-bye to us."

But we promised fidelity to the Midi. "Only, tell madame to whitewash her passages, and try to put a little more light and air into them, and then you will be able to hold your own against all rivals."

As we left Sion, its three hills rose up magnificently above the houses of the town. We almost fancied we saw the outlines of the goat-woman standing on the brow of the rock, her pet goat Janon by her side. Then everything faded. We crossed the torrent of the Morge, the boundary line between Upper and Lower Valais; passed on amidst plains and mountains until at last we halted at Martigny, with the intention of making an excursion to the great St. Bernard.

We soon found ourselves in the admirable quarters of the *Cheval Blanc*; madame the most attentive of hostesses, and H. C. at once falling a victim to the charming beauty of mademoiselle, who had deep blue eyes and the complexion of a soft damask rose.

Having settled ourselves, we were just in time to see the declining sun flush the snow mountains, as we found our way to the covered wooden bridge, of which there are so few examples left in Switzerland. It crosses the rapid river, which here is especially fine in colour. There were great orchards laden with pears and apples, and everywhere we saw vineyards. On the other side the stream the hills rose to gigantic heights. Everything was dyed with the crimson sunset, which sparkled upon the water, and in the softest rose-colour lay upon the snow-clad hills. Above was the deep blue of the sky. The

evening was full of calmness and repose; the cattle were all going home, straggling down the long white road by the river side. The whole scene, air, sky and beauties of earth, suggested paradise. Such weather on the morrow for our long drive to St. Bernard might well mark a red-letter day in our lives.

“That beautiful rose-flush,” said H. C., “reminds me of mademoiselle’s exquisite complexion. I think we cannot do better than make Martigny our headquarters as long as we are in the neighbourhood. It is evidently a most delightful hotel”

## CHAPTER III.

Martigny—A rallying point—Amiable hostess—Mountain carriage—Early start for St. Bernard—Amidst the Alps—Orsières—Mont Velan—Liddes—Arcadian déjeuner—Picturesque village—Swiss chalets—Tempting pedlars—Interesting driver—Bourg St. Pierre—Au déjeuner de Napoléon—Cantine de Proz—Another Bruno and another appeal—"No bribery"—Pas de Marengo—Desolate scene—Reaching the Hospice—Silent welcome—Dogs snappish—The *clavendier*—"Be wary of a St. Bernard"—The great dining-room—Exaggeration—Freezing atmosphere—Gloomy corridors—A jolly monk—Empty coffers and anxious times—Wonderful scene and silence—Picturesque Dominican monk—A Barneicide feast—Sounds of harmony—After Benediction—In the church—Weird scene—All but frozen—The next morning—That terrible morgue—The packmen again—Dominican monk bound for Rome—"All for the present"—H. C. expatiates—A last impression.

MARTIGNY has very little to recommend it, but its surroundings are beautiful. Few would stay here, if it were not a rallying point for many widely diversified excursions. From hence you may easily reach the Rhône Glacier and survey that wonderful field of perpetual ice, with its sharp needle-like peaks pointing to the skies. Or you may pass onward to the Italian lakes, where luxuriance of vegetation and the deep blue of the heavens charm the eye. Or you may rise early, as we did, and take the long drive full of unusual splendour to the monastery of the Great St. Bernard.

We reached Martigny towards sunset. Madame at the *Hôtel du Cheval Blanc* was everything that was hospitable: her one anxiety, that we should be comfortable. She was tall and substantial, with a face and expression brimming over with good intentions towards mankind in general and ourselves in particular. Shall we ever forget the morning we left for good and all? As we stood waiting at the door for the omnibus to take us to the station, she came forward, in a most motherly

way, put her hand upon our shoulder, and with anxiety and good-nature in tone and eyes :

“ You have been pleased with the hotel ? ” she said.

For an instant we really thought the hand on the shoulder was only the introduction to a more demonstrative leave-taking. But when we assured her earnestly that we had seldom been more charmed, the hand slipped away, she gave a sigh of great contentment, and said : “ Then you will come again ? ”

But this is anticipating.

Madame’s daughter took her place in the bureau, where madame was never to be seen.

We wondered where mademoiselle had found her great beauty ; her well-formed face and features, her soft dark blue eyes and damask-rose complexion. She spoke English admirably and had very gentle manners. H. C.’s susceptible nature at once fell before this new divinity.

The garden in front of the hotel was beautifully kept ; full of flowers and trees and cunningly disposed benches ; a fountain plashed musically in the centre. Here H. C. would take up his station, gazing for long intervals upon the windows of the bureau with dreams in his eyes and poetry in his mind.

A truly poetical scene was before us as we wandered down the road towards the river. It was spanned by the covered wooden bridge, and beneath the high arch the water rushed in a swift torrent. Above it, crowning a high hill, was an old ruined castle belonging to the earlier centuries. Far up the valley and far down, we traced the course of the rapid water. Here the Dranse flows into the Rhône, and Martigny has suffered severely from occasional inundations. This makes the place unhealthy and malarial at times. All about us were snow-capped mountains flushed with the rose of sunset. The valley was just wide enough for the river and the town.

The latter has no feature of interest. Its church was not beautiful, and streets and houses had no picturesque outlines. Here the monks of St. Bernard have a convent to which they occasionally come down, and we paid it a visit before leaving, to be recorded in due time.

The hospice itself, far up in the mountains, was our chief reason for our present sojourn. We had long wished to see the



WHYMPER & C.

VII  
VIEW FROM THE OLD TOWER AT MARTIGNY ABOVE THE BRIDGE.



famous old place and make acquaintance with the monks and the splendid dogs.

"A long drive of ten hours," said madame. "You will have to start early, for the sun soon goes down."

"The earlier the better," we replied. "We shall be ready at six o'clock."

"That is a little *too* soon," returned madame. "The sun will hardly have risen. Our mornings are cold and the valleys misty. Seven o'clock would be a better hour for the month of October."

"Then seven let it be. You will see to the carriage?"

"A carriage perfectly comfortable"—emphatically—"and a *cocher de confiance*. You are wonderfully favoured by the weather. It is veritably summer at last."

This interesting conversation took place at the dinner-table. We had the room to ourselves, and madame had come in to see that everything was en règle, and to give an eye to the dishes served up by the cook. One or two that for some reason did not please her were returned by flying domestics with a sharp word to the chef to mind what he was about. Everything was excellent, and madame was evidently born to her vocation. "*La table d'hôte est la clef d'un hôtel*," she remarked, as a sort of apology for her strictures.

After dinner we went down the road under the flashing sky, stood on the covered bridge and watched and listened to the rapid course of the river. The stars were reflected upon its surface, the great mountains rose about us in dark outlines, here and there a light gleamed from a distant cottage. No sound was audible, no creature stirred; the cattle had all gone home and their tinkling bells were silent: the long white road by the river side was deserted. Only the rushing of the water broke the stillness of the air; a sound full of charm and grandeur, suggesting strength and life and movement, harmonising with the giant hills.

There was a crispness in the atmosphere that told of autumn, and we realised that madame was probably right in suggesting six in the morning as an uncomfortable hour for starting. We realised its truth still more when roused about that hour, and on opening the window found the air sharp and the stars still

faintly visible in the sky, though paling before the dawn. By seven o'clock we had full daylight, but as yet the sun was behind the mountains.

Madame had prepared delightful coffee and hot rolls and the very best of fresh butter, after which our powers of endurance were equal to anything. Even shock the first was sustained without flinching, when our "comfortable carriage" came round and we saw it in all its glory.

We had pictured something soft and luxurious and very superior to our previous day's arrangement. It turned out a miserable affair, jolting and springless, with hard seats and stiff back. Evidently it had been used yesterday, and the driver had not even washed off the stains of travel. We gently remonstrated with madame. A few hours in such a shandaradan would dislocate all the bones in one's body: the pleasure-excursion become a funeral cortège.

"Not at all, monsieur," smiled the imperturbable lady, whom nothing put out; not even the suggestion of sudden death. "I assure you, you will find it very comfortable. Du reste, these are the only carriages we have in this part of the world for the mountains. Nothing else would stand the strain. As for jolting, you will not feel it. I never do."

It was all very well for madame to say that, whose bones were substantially covered. Had she rolled down a rocky mountain she would have arrived comfortably at the bottom. We of Pharaoh's lean kine had a different tale to tell. But there was no help for it, and we accepted the inevitable.

Madame wished us bon voyage, the driver, dressed in a blue blouse, cracked his whip, and away we went at the mercy of one small strong horse.

There was not a cloud in the sky, but the sun was still far behind the mountains and the air was keen. We clattered through the little town, where signs of life and awakening had hardly begun to show themselves. Only the baker sent forth from his open door a delicious steam and perfume of hot bread. His trade was so clean and comfortable we wondered all men were not bakers.

From first to last the drive lay amidst the sublime Alpine hills. Very soon we came up with the river, and crossing an





old wooden bridge, left the road to Chamonix on the right and followed the course of the Dranse. Presently sunshine and warm summer heat changed everything to paradise. We passed up between the mountains, now narrowing to a gorge, now opening into a wide fertile plain, with here and there a village picturesque with gabled cottages built of wood, white-washed, or stained a deep dark brown that made them look



LIDDES.

centuries old. The people, not very comely or gracious, for the most part went about their work without troubling to throw a glance at the rattling cavalcade. Occasionally we passed a saw-mill with its picturesque waterwheel turning and creaking.

The bed of the river deepened as we ascended, until we looked into shuddering depths. Nothing could be more beautiful and romantic. Far down, the water frothed and swirled round the rocks it met on its course, the precipitous sides a wealth of ferns and wild-flowers.

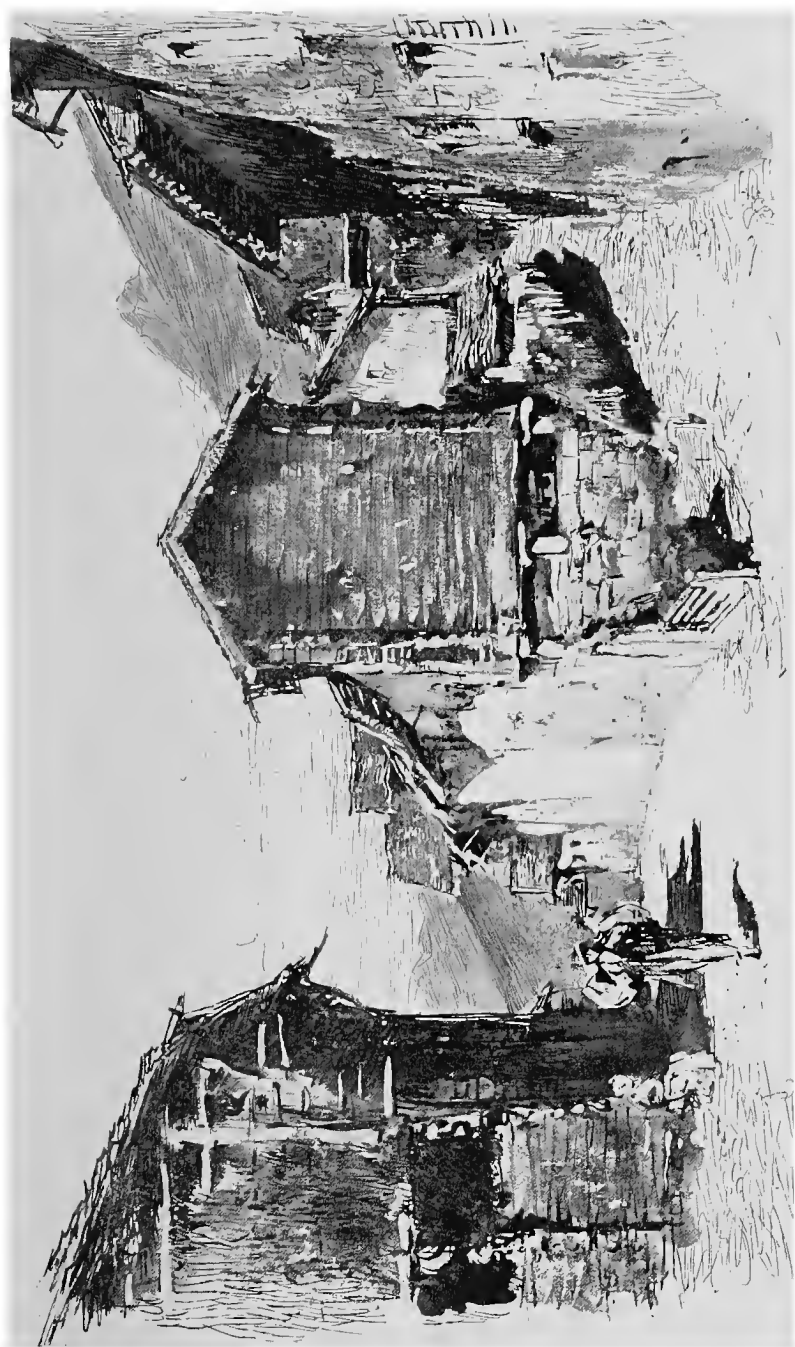
Then the deep gorge passed away and far up the valley the white stream ran like a silver thread, the sun flashing upon the water. The air was so rarefied that everything stood out clearly to the very hill-tops. It was not rapid travelling, for the driver would not hurry himself; and there was so much ascending that too often we could not get beyond a walking pace. It did not matter; two miles an hour in such scenery was sufficient speed.

At Orsières, a small town or village with a curious old tower overlooking the valley, we were 3000 feet above the level of the sea. Here we crossed the Dranse over its deep bed, and behind us towered the great Mont Velan, with its eternal snow and splendid glacier. It is a difficult excursion, but may be made by good mountain climbers. The views from the summit are magnificent, reaching to the Lake of Geneva. Beyond Orsières the valley widened into broad pastures, the home of countless cattle; of cornfields and vineyards.

About midday we reached Liddes, where we waited for luncheon and changed our horse, carriage and driver. H. C. declared himself hungry as a hunter, but the inn people were only equal to a substantial omelette, unlimited bread and butter, and a bottle of excellent Lamarque: the latter a *vin du pays* much appreciated by the Romans.

Liddes was very picturesque with its narrow crooked street and dark gabled houses, but it was frightfully dirty, and when, after our frugal refreshment, we started to walk in advance of the carriage, we found ourselves in a slough of despond. Our new driver had had to be fetched from the fields, and we were ready before he had made his appearance.

The little houses had deep, overhanging eaves and were picturesque, but the village people were not attractive, the old men and women looking bent and withered, as though hard work and poor fare had been their lot in life. The younger had a certain comeliness inseparable from youth, but no real beauty to boast of, and their dress was commonplace. In the small village square was the village pump, at which a woman stood in the sunshine drawing water, her hair neatly braided, a small white shawl over her shoulders, a red petticoat made short enough to display a well-stockinged leg and a neatly





turned ankle showing just above the wooden *sabot*; the only picturesque woman we saw throughout the day.

The gabled cottages with their wooden balconies and plaster walls were charming in outline: the true chalet of the country. The roof had need be strong, for in winter it is often almost crushed in by the snow: and without the snow-plough the roads are impassable. It is then that people wander away and get buried in the white mantle which falls so silently, and are found dead and frozen, with more often than not an expression of calmness and rest upon their faces.

In a corner of the square, a small crowd of women had clustered round a couple of packmen who were perambulating the country with their wares, just as they do in our English villages. They were unrolling temptations before the women. Many a piece of woollen stuff changed hands, lightening the pack. From a great pair of scales they weighed immense skeins of thick white wool, which the women knit into winter garments. They must have something to keep out the cold, since they are not blessed with the rich food and generous draughts of wine of their town brethren.

Few words passed. The women knew just what they wanted, and however much their mouths might water, confined themselves to necessities. Luxuries were not even glanced at, for they are a poor community, and credit is only given where the purchaser is known to have a warm stocking in the chimney-corner.

We left them to it, and went our way.

Our new driver caught us up at last. He had dressed himself in his best: a short jacket over a shirt white as the mountain snow, and a mountaineer's hat. All he wanted was the Edelweiss to make him perfect, but to that he was probably indifferent, having passed the age of youth and romance; had lived half a century and more in this workaday world; was owner of the equipage he drove, master of the inn that had given us luncheon, and which he had handed over to the keeping of his son and daughter-in-law.

We went on through a series of sublime impressions until we reached Bourg St. Pierre, a large village at the mouth of the Valsory. Its eleventh-century church was interesting, and

on a wall near the tower we noticed a Roman milestone. The village was once well fortified, and traces of the old fortifications and an ancient gateway were still visible. Here Napoleon breakfasted when he crossed the Alps in 1800, and the room in the village inn, with its sign, *Au déjeuner de Napoléon*, still exists.

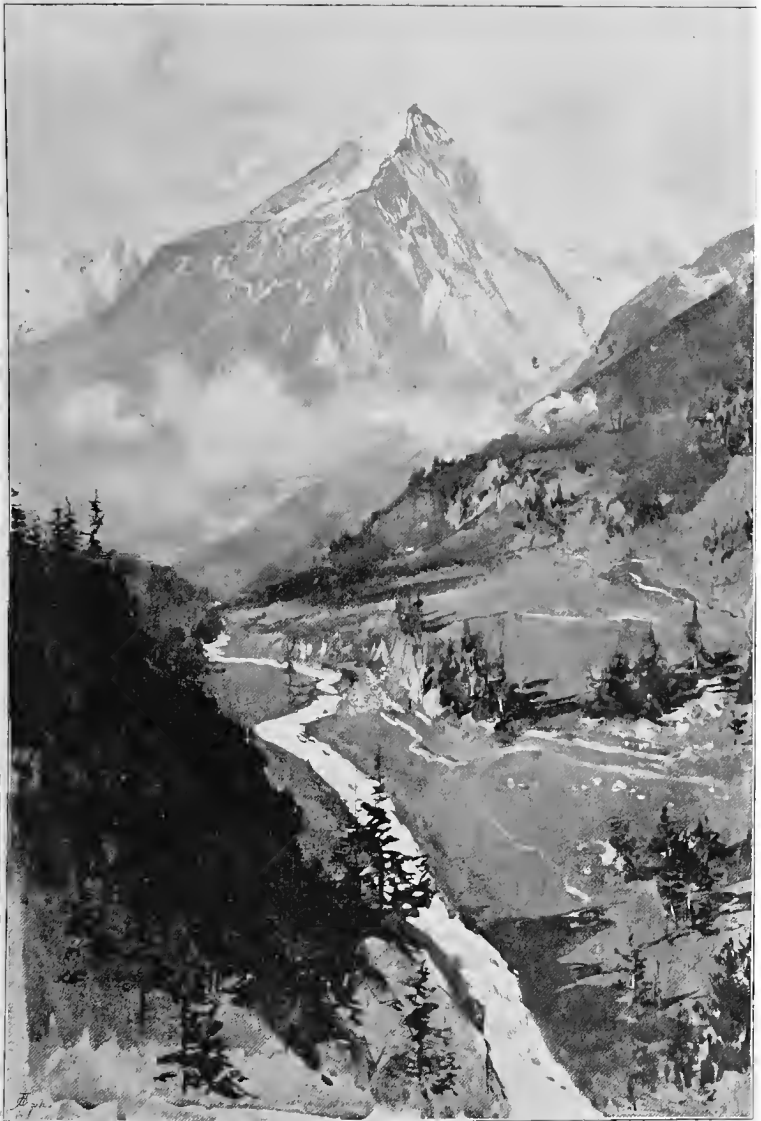
It is a fairly flourishing village, with one or two quaint old houses. Near it is a wonderful botanical garden laid out by the Geneva Society, and possessing specimens of all the Alpine flora—so beautiful and varied. Many a mountain excursion can be made from this point: to the famous glacier of Valsory; to the Chalets d'Amont and the fine waterfall, with the famous glacier in the background; to the Grand Combin, the Maisons-Blanches, the Glacier du Sonadon. From some of the heights the magnificent Mont Blanc range stands out boldly.

Ignoring excursions, we went our way over the deep and splendid gorge of the Valsory—where Napoleon met with almost insurmountable difficulties in his march: a fine road hewn out of the rock, cutting through the Forest of St. Pierre and the wonderful *Défilé de Charreire*.

The ascent into the mountains now became much more steep and laborious, and we seemed to have left the world very far behind.

The sun was declining, the air growing cold and keen, when we reached the Cantine de Proz. Here we were actually in touch with the monastery, for they have a telephone by which they can hold communication with each other. On winter days or nights, when a solitary wayfarer passes the cantine, the fact is telephoned to the hospice. If the wayfarer has not appeared when full time has expired, one of the monks, accompanied by a faithful dog, goes forth in search of the wanderer, finds him, administers a cordial and helps him on his way to the hospice. Travellers frozen to death in the days gone by were not at all uncommon, but now it is an almost unknown event.

A girl came forward to the door of the cantine as the driver cracked his whip and drew up. In her arms she held a St. Bernard puppy, large as a good-sized lamb. It was two months old, and its beautiful brown eyes looked at us with almost a human expression.



ON THE WAY TO ST. BERNARD.



These animals vary very much, and some of them look as amiable and trustworthy as others are the opposite. This puppy would certainly grow into an admirable dog. He gazed at us pathetically, struggled in the arms that held him tightly, and barked : a youthful bark, but expressive.

"Please take me with you," it said. "I want to see the world. Here my experiences of human nature are limited to these simple folk. They are all very well in their way, but they don't understand the fine possibilities and the grand nature of such a dog as I am. Now you would appreciate me. I would follow you to the ends of the earth, your faithful dog for ever. Don't reject my petition."

Very much what his cousin Bruno had said to us at St. Maurice, but more confidently and youthfully expressed. Bruno had nearly broken his chain when we left : this puppy only shed silent tears. We yielded against our better judgment.

"We will buy him," we said to the girl, "and take him on our return journey. What is his price?"

"Two hundred francs," she replied. "But if you gave four hundred you couldn't have him. He is already sold. We are keeping him for another month, until his master is ready for him."

The puppy perfectly understood ; he whined, and the tears came into his eyes.

"I don't like him," he said, "and I didn't want him to buy me. He is a rough man who lives in Martigny. He will never talk to me gently or caress me with loving hand ; I shall never care for him ; and I shall never see the world. Try what you can do for me."

But there was nothing to be done. A bargain's a bargain in the human world whatever it may be in the canine. So we went on our way, and the girl and the dog looked after us until we passed out of sight.

For a time we made way through the pastures of the Plan de Proz strewn with great boulders. Then we entered the rocky defile of the Pas de Marengo, with the mountains closing all about us. Colder and keener grew the air. Snow was everywhere. We crossed over the Dranse to the wild and desolate pass of the Grande Combe, up which the little horse struggled

bravely. Very often the road is impassable to vehicles, and travellers have to wade the best way they can through many feet of snow, finding themselves sometimes half buried in an avalanche. The atmosphere is icy cold. We are approaching the tops of the mountains, and if there is any wind it blows over the snow-fields with a sharpness that cuts you in two.

We passed through a tunnel made on account of these avalanches, and once on the other side, above us, cold and grey and lonely, stood the far-famed hospice.

It was five o'clock and still broad daylight. Anything more desolate looking could hardly be conceived. Our arrival was not expected, and not a creature was to be seen; neither monk nor dog. It was distinctly depressing. A few more struggles through the snow on the part of the horse, and we reached the entrance.

As we did so, two or three dogs came forward. We touched the head of one of them, and he snarled and snapped, and just grazed our glove. This was our welcome. After that we made no more advances.

And there was this characteristic about the dogs of St. Bernard, that they did not seem to wish to make friends with any one. It was almost as though they were above the friendship of man, and existed only for their high mission—that of saving life. Whatever the cause, the dogs disappointed us.

No one came forward to receive us. We had come up to the entrance silently through the snow, with no more sound than the messenger of death. Our driver went into the cold stone hall and a loud bell echoed through the building.

In a few moments one of the brothers appeared in a black robe, with cowl thrown back: one of the canons, as they call themselves, the *clarendier* of the establishment. He greeted us with great hospitality, and said we were the only visitors who had arrived that day. They had not expected any one, and by some oversight our arrival had not been telephoned from Proz. The dogs were restlessly moving about, liked caged animals wanting to be let loose. We mentioned the unfriendly welcome received from one of them.

"They are out of condition," replied the monk. "It is their feeding-hour, too, and this makes them snappish, even with each

other. I fear our dogs are considered by the outside world as a species of canine angel. They have a romantic mission to perform, appealing strongly to human admiration, but their nature is very much that of all dogs. Then we do not train them to be the companions of man, reserving all their sympathies for their work. Yes, it is true that you must be a little wary of the St. Bernard, magnificent as he is. Everything depends upon the breed; and where there has been a flaw in the disposition of the ancestor, he is capable of treachery. Especially is he sometimes given to attacking the hand that feeds him, the master whom of all others he should defend with his life."

"That is not the reputation he bears in the world, but your dogs look a little dilapidated. Have they been ill?"

"Indeed, yes," returned the monk, pathetically. "They have had an epidemic we could not conquer. We have lost nearly all, and have only eight dogs left. Next year and the year after, we hope to bring them up again to something like their proper number."

Thus talking, he led the way into the great dining-room set apart for visitors: a very dreary room. The whole place was perishingly cold. There was not a spark of fire anywhere, nor did they attempt to light any. So far they fell short in their hospitality. We had never felt anything like the freezing atmosphere; penetrating, icy, deathly. A long table ran down two sides of the room. Round the fire-place was a large circle of empty chairs, intensely melancholy looking. This was the fire-place of which we had read many a description: an enormous chimney piled up with blazing logs that crackled and flamed and cheered the circle of travellers. What we beheld in reality was a very small grate capable of holding a handful of coals: the crackling faggot and blazing hearth were dreams of the imagination.

We should have been thankful even for the handful of coals, and expected to see it appear; but they did not attempt to light it, and we no doubt erred in not making the request.

The monk then conducted us up the cold stone staircase, through dungeon-like passages, equally built of stone, to our bed-rooms. Small windows looked out upon a snow world, and here too the atmosphere was freezing.

"There has been no fire here for a long time," said the canon. "Shall we light one?"

We thought not; it would probably only draw out the damp and fill the room with smoke. The rooms were plainly furnished but very clean, which was more than could be said for the whole of the hospice.

"These rooms are more luxurious than our cells," said the monk, smiling: "but ours are smaller and not so cold. Would you prefer cells?"

He was by no means cadaverous and ascetic-looking; one might almost have called him a jolly monk.

"How long have you been here?" we asked him.

"Fifteen years," he replied. "As a rule, after living here fifteen years we have to leave and go down to Martigny or elsewhere. Few constitutions will bear more than fifteen years of this perpetual winter. It is a great strain. But it suits me. I like it and am going to remain on. These mountain solitudes please me more than the town. I like the life; I love the dogs; and it delights me to receive visitors; to go off in search of wanderers."

"Is the search a regular thing?"

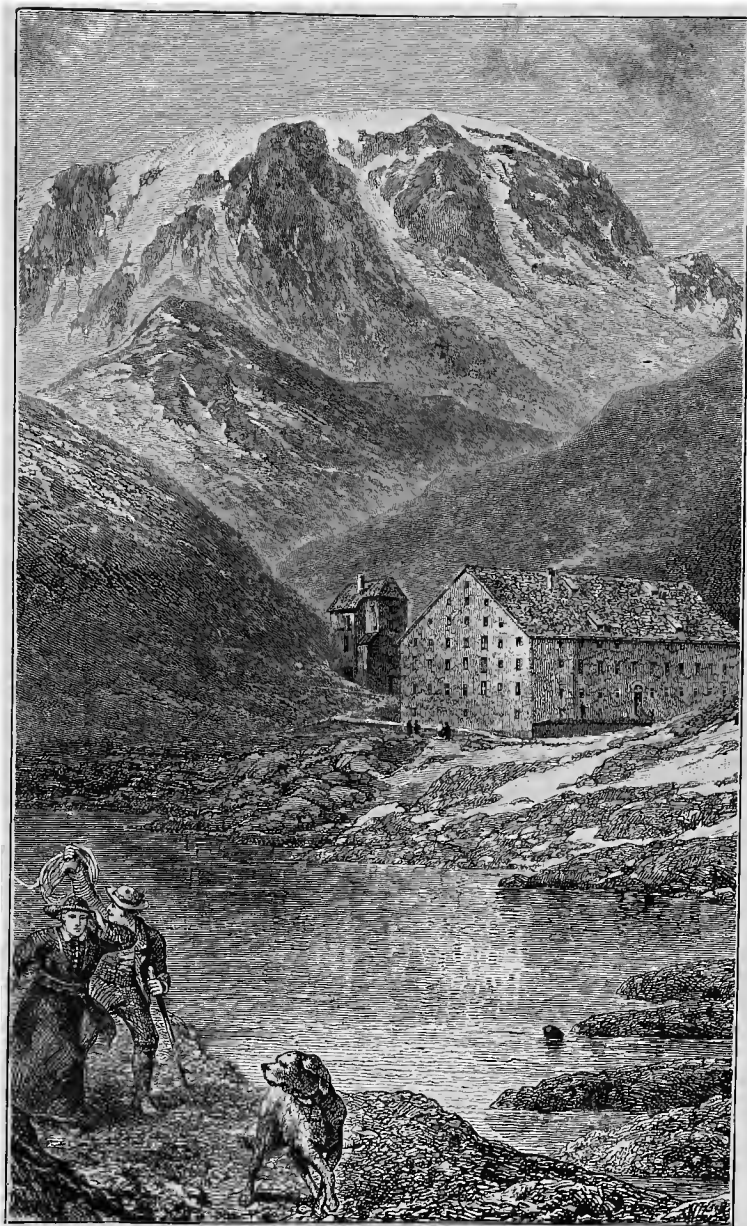
"As regular as sunrise and sunset. Morning and evening two monks accompanied by dogs start on their quest: two take the Italian side and two the French. We never fail."

"Do you ever find any travellers frozen to death?"

"Thank Heaven, the time for that is past. From both sides we can be warned of the approach of travellers. We often find them weary, worn out, half petrified with cold; in that state when sleep may overtake them at any moment. Sometimes they have actually yielded to the fatal influence. Our noble dogs are in advance, and never fail to find. We see the pause, we hear the deep, strong baying that has in it almost a sound of mingled agony and joy. They know full well what it means, and seem to rejoice as much as we do. So we now are almost always able to rescue in time. But it is certain that without our help many would perish."

"Are you many in the monastery?"

"About fifteen of us. We are of the Augustinian order, as you know, and may be distinguished by the white cord we wear



HOSPICE FROM THE ITALIAN SIDE.



round our neck, like a long chain. The monks of St. Bernard number about sixty altogether, and we call ourselves brothers. Our headquarters are at Martigny, but we have also a hospice on the Simplon. This of course is our most famous hospice, and from its position—a direct route between France and Italy—perhaps the most needed. But now, before daylight dies you will like to take a short walk. Dinner will be ready in an hour. You think it cold? We consider it still quite summer. If you were here in our real winter—it will begin next month—you would be almost petrified. The very paths are mountains of snow. No carriage can approach. Our guests for many months are all poor travellers, whom we have to entertain free of charge, thankful that we are able to do it.”

“Are you a rich community?”

“Alas, we are very poor and sadly need funds. Such is the increase of travellers, whether for pleasure or other purposes, that we are compelled to begin building a large wing. We never make any charge to our visitors, and you would be surprised how little those give who apparently have it in their power to give much.”

“Yet you were once wealthy.”

“Very wealthy in the Middle Ages. We had many grants. One large grant from Germany; others from many countries. We were recognised as a great necessity, and had existed ever since the year 960. St. Bernard was our founder, he who was born in an old château at Menthon in Savoy. Nearly all we possess now comes from Switzerland. Our funds diminish, our expenses increase. At the present moment it is a serious problem how we shall raise the very considerable fund we are in need of.”

The chanoine accompanied us to the entrance, and we went round the mountain path that bordered the lake sleeping to the left, reflecting the mountains upon its cold grey surface: the desolate scene sublime in its grandeur and utter stillness. Though twilight was falling, the white snow still caught and reflected a certain amount of light. The sky above was a deep dark blue, in which here and there a pale star was beginning to shine.

We were now on the Italian side, on the road to Aosta, and

from the level of the lake we looked up at the monastery standing out grey and hard against its background of snow mountains.

Just beyond it, on the hill slope, was a building one could hardly think of without a shudder: the morgue, with its dead bodies of travellers and monks lying down or propped up against the wall: bodies the ever-freezing atmosphere gradually reduces to skeletons without the ordinary process of decomposition. Lights gleamed from the windows of the monastery, and from where we stood we neither saw nor heard any other token of life. It might have been a petrified world. But we pictured the joy with which, century after century, many a weary traveller, plodding through fields and mountains of snow, had caught the first glimpse of those friendly lights, and murmured a thanksgiving for the rescue at hand.

If this was summer, what must winter be, we wondered. As we stood gazing, our very feet froze to the snow. A cold night wind crept up the valley. We turned and made our way back to the hospice through the white path.

No dogs came to meet us this time; they were kennelled for the night. All was quiet. H. C. rang the deep bell in the passage, and the canon appeared in a few moments. We were shivering with cold, but evidently as they thought it still summer there was no fire forthcoming. The next morning he apologised; feared we had felt the cold; it had never occurred to him to light the fire in the dining-room—they had not yet begun fires. We accepted the apology—and regretted the fire. As we stood in the passage waiting for dinner, talking to the monk, out of the darkness there appeared a very picturesque object: a Dominican monk, on his way to Rome. Here he would pass the night.

He was tall and dignified, and dressed in the long black and white garments of his order: a pale, handsome, refined face, the well-developed head seeming to denote a high state of intellect. Hurriedly the canon procured him some wine, for he looked cold and fatigued. Having swallowed a small tumbler of it, he passed straight into the chapel, where Benediction would soon commence.

Our dinner was ready, and never was hot soup so grateful.



LAKE AT THE MONASTERY.



One of the servants of the place waited upon us: a man in ordinary dress, who spends his winters at the hospice because he can only get work in summer. It was a frugal meal of several courses, but of food so rough that we had to pass almost the whole of it, and found our hunger very little satisfied. Still, they gave us of their best, though probably in the season of many travellers their supplies are better and less limited. One ought not to expect too much when approaching some 10,000 feet above the world.

The banquet was just ending when the sound of an organ smote upon our ears. The effect up in this mountain pass was weird and curious. Strangely out of keeping with their surroundings were these deep strains of harmony that seemed to shake the building. The canon appeared at the moment.

"Benediction is just over," he said. "Come with me before they extinguish the lights."

We followed him, entered the church, and found ourselves in that semi-obscurity so picturesque and effective. In the dark body of the building a group of poor people were on their knees. The chancel was lighted up, showing the old stalls on either side. Candles blazed upon the altar. We arrived just at the end; the last notes of the organ died away, the people streamed out, the monk who had been officiating departed to his cell. Lights were extinguished. Only one or two were left burning.

We thought ourselves alone with the canon, went up to the altar and examined the stalls. Then, with a start, we saw a solitary figure kneeling, just in front of the stalls, immovable as though carved in stone, almost invisible in the obscurity. He faced the altar. The capuchin was thrown back, his bare head was bowed, the hands were clasped; he seemed lost in prayer. It was a weird, dramatic scene never to be forgotten—this praying monk in that solitary mountain chapel.

We wondered how long he would remain there after his day's fatigue. For ourselves, cold won the victory. The dimly-lighted dining-room was cheerless to the last degree; the atmosphere seemed to freeze the very marrow in our bones; it was utterly uninhabitable. Outside we could not wander in the darkness. We should lose ourselves; or fall over a

precipice ; or tumble into the lake and drown in the ice water. Or it might be that round that terrible morgue we should see an army of ghosts, keeping ghastly revels on the frozen snow. There was only one thing to be done—to go to bed.

Once in our room we remembered our flask with its century-old brandy. No doubt it saved our life, and we strictly halved it with H. C. and saved his also. Much comforted, and piling every conceivable thing upon our bed, we disappeared between the blankets, and gradually unfroze.

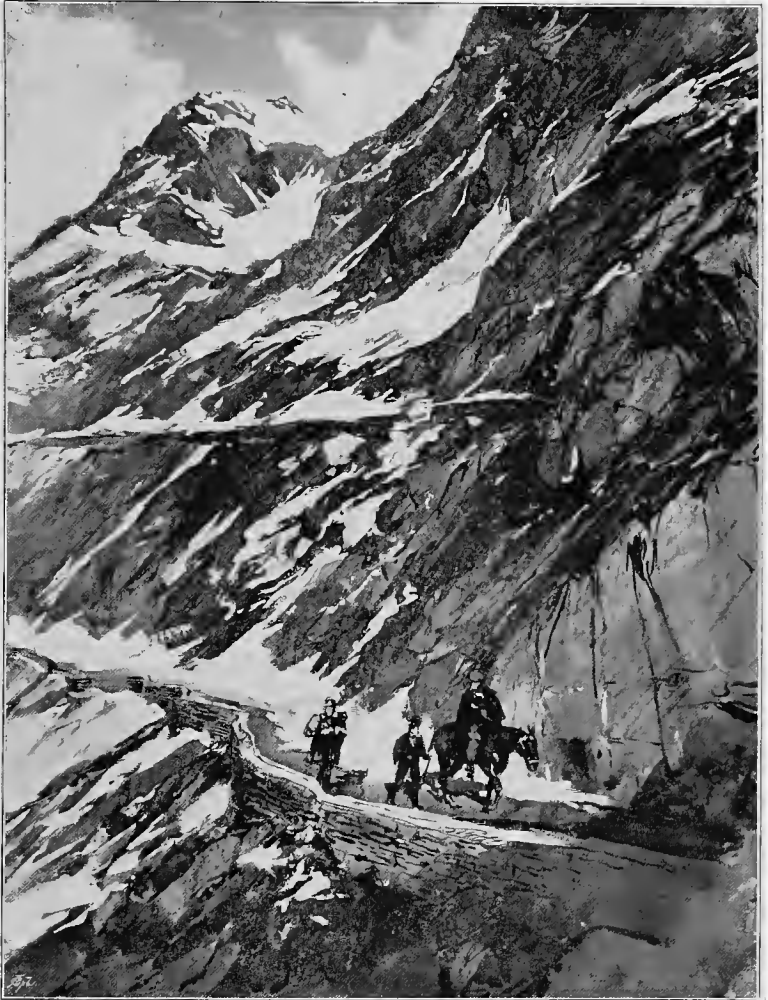
In the next room, through the thin partition, we heard H. C.'s teeth chattering. Through the night we were disturbed with occasional groans and sighs and dreamy exorcising of ghosts, as though the whole army of the unburied spirits of the morgue were invading his premises. The mournful building itself was not forty yards from our windows, and though dark the night, its sad outlines were plainly marked against the white snow : a silent tomb full of dead bodies, in their winding-sheets uncoffined, in death unshriven. Well might their ghosts "walk."

The sun rose gloriously the next morning, there was not a cloud in the sky, the hill-tops were gilded and the shadows crept upwards. We found breakfast much more comforting and agreeable than dinner, though only plain dry bread and coffee. In the broad daylight the gloom of the dining-room gave place to a certain cheerfulness. The empty grate was less repelling. Outside, the atmosphere was freezing, but the sunshine atoned for all.

The canon let loose the dogs, but we were not much more taken with them than we had been last night. They would not make friends with anyone ; mankind was not necessary to their happiness. There was the same strange restlessness about them, as though they wanted to be off on their search ; apparently to them the end and aim of life. They had wonderfully intelligent heads and eyes, but not the beauty of the long-haired St. Bernard. The latter does not exist at the monastery.

Walking over frozen snow some twenty feet deep—which made us feel very much as if we were on the edge of a precipice—the canon took us up to the morgue. Through the wide

grating of the unglazed window the ghastly procession of the unburied dead disclosed itself. Some were upright against the



ARRIVING AT THE HOSPICE FROM THE ITALIAN SIDE.

walls, some had fallen, some were bent double. Their winding-sheets clothed them like another skin, making the skeleton

outlines painfully prominent. Before he would allow us to look, the canon looked himself; a keen scrutiny, as though he feared some dead body might have come back to life, and was pursuing unholy rites. But all was silent and still; nothing but the blast of the final trump could ever bring them to life again.

We went round to the lake, blue and beautiful in the sunshine, reflecting the outlines of the mountains. As we stood looking upon the surface, a cavalcade came up the mountain path from the Italian side: a traveller riding a mule, a guide in front, mountaineers following behind. Nothing could have looked more picturesque than this little procession, with the lake below, and the snow mountains in the background. It somehow made one think of travelling in the early ages; brought to mind scenes and incidents in Scott's unfading novels. The traveller dismounted at the hospice for breakfast and rest before continuing his journey on the French side. The dogs came forward and sniffed, and realising that they were not wanted—he was only a commonplace traveller in no need of rescue—treated him with indifference.

Out of a small dependance came a withered old woman, who begged us to inspect her wares: photographs, and dried Alpine flowers, and Swiss watches—the ordinary collection of remembrances one hardly expected to find in a mountain pass. Next came our friends the packmen, that we had left displaying their goods at Liddes. They were trudging laboriously through the snow, their great burdens upon their backs—also a strange sight in this high and solitary region. They too were on their way into Italy. The men were partners; the one French, the other Italian; and each led the expedition in his own country: diplomatists in their own line.

Then the canon took us into the great stone kitchen, where for the first time we found a warm atmosphere. It was well fitted up with all a kitchen's necessities. Next to it was a room crowded with people, many of them poor travellers on their way north or south. Others were servants of the hospice. Here the packmen had delivered themselves of their loads, and were being refreshed with coffee and bread. Their long morning tramp had made them hungry as hunters, and their food was evidently sweet as ambrosia. As this was the only

comfortable room in the place, they made the most of it. But these lower rooms and passages were very like dungeons, the people looked dirty, and everywhere there was a close unwholesome smell, which made our visit a rapid one. We were glad to get back to the upper floor again.

Here we encountered the Dominican monk about to continue his way to Italy. After all, he could not have spent the whole night on his knees in the chapel. A long sleep and rest had restored energy to his frame and fire to his eye. This morning he was all vigour and animation, a handsome presence, wonderfully striking in his monk's garb.

"I would that we were going the same road," he said to us, "that by companionship we might shorten the journey. But I, as you see, am travelling on foot."

"But you will not walk the whole way to Rome?"

"No. At Aosta I shall probably take train. I am bound on a mission to the Vatican, and that performed, shall take up my abode in Rome for two years."

"Most delightful of all cities," cried H. C., "full of the remnants of the past, where you breathe an historic atmosphere and walk hand in hand with the early martyrs. The Roman women, too, were very handsome."

"I care little for your antiquities," returned the monk with a smile. "And as to your Roman women, whether of to-day or the days gone by—I may not look at them. Signs and symbols of the past do not impress me. Nature has gifted me with no imagination. The present to me is everything. I would rather collect a thousand francs to help this St. Bernard Brotherhood than a million to preserve all the Roman remains in existence."

The canon came up at the moment, and heard the last sentence. We were standing at the front entrance, with all the snow about us. Close to us one of the fine dogs had condescended to take his station. A couple of days' sojourn in the hospice and we should after all have been great friends. Every now and then he looked up into our face with his wonderful eyes, and a half whine and a restless movement seemed petitioning that we would go off with him for a long walk in the snow.

"It is very deep," said his whine. "Who knows but some perishing creature is waiting for rescue?"

The canon opened his ears to the monk's remark. "You would be doing a good work," he said, "if you could persuade the world to send us contributions. We are in great need of funds."

"You should make a distinct charge to every visitor who comes to you," we returned—"especially now that their name is legion. That at least would help you."

The canon shook his head.

"We have debated upon that," he said, "but it does not agree with our ideas of hospitality. It would upset our rules of a thousand years. We cannot do it. Try both of you to get the world to help us."

At this moment our driver came round with his strong little horse and rude chariot.

"Good travelling to-day," he said, bowing to the assemblage. "The downhill path is easy." And a verse of Christina Rossetti's flashed into the memory.

"Turn again, oh, my sweetest, turn again, false and fleetest,  
This way whereof thou weetest I fear is hell's own track."

"Nay, too steep for hill-mounting, nay, too late for cost-counting:  
This downhill path is easy, but there's no turning back."

A few moments more, and we had started on our journey.

Our last impression of the monastery was of a grey cold building standing out in sharp outlines against the snow mountains. In the foreground stood the picturesque monk in his magpie garments, and the canon in black and more melancholy dress. The monk had one hand raised, as though speeding the parting guest. Gazing after us with all his eyes was the fine St. Bernard dog. He gave one sharp distinctive bark; then another. It plainly said: "I protest against this hasty departure. Come back and stay a week with us. We will give you roaring fires to warm your body and cordials to cheer your heart. Together we will take long walks through the snow in the valleys and over the mountains, and I will be your faithful friend and companion by day, your watchguard at night."

What more he would have said cannot be told, for there was a sharp turn in the road, and we went out of sight and hearing.

## CHAPTER IV.

A last look—Bruno again—Threatens revenge—Our old driver—Liddes—  
 A bold request—Polite refusal—Arriving at the *Cheval Blanc*—Madame  
 effusive—A worthy canon—Student's den—In need of funds—How raise  
 them?—Curious American—Schoolmaster and boys—Three cheers for  
 St. Bernard—Madame alarmed—Good-bye to Martigny—St. Maurice and  
 Bruno again—What does it mean?—Montreux—On the Lake of Geneva  
 —Pile city of the Lake-dwellers—Another city of to-day—The exhibition  
 —Silk and lace industries—In the past—Farel and Calvin—Francis I.  
 —Days of the Reformation—Calvin's Exile—And return—His influence  
 —Castellio—Servetus—Martyrdom—On the heights.

It cannot be said that we left the cold and comfortless monastery with regret. Its romance lies in that wonderful situation amidst the high Alpine hills; in the object for which it exists—the rescue and shelter of snow-bound travellers; in the little colony of monks devoting their lives to good deeds; in the sagacity, faithfulness and almost human comprehension of that race of dogs that, like the pigeons of St. Mark's, deserve special protection.

We took our last look of the hospice as we turned the sharp angle of the road. Above it stood the small, grey, melancholy morgue; and we almost shuddered as the wide grating caught our eye and we remembered how that morning we had looked upon a ghastly vision. To the monk the sight was a matter of indifference. He had taken us to the strange tomb-building with the air of one who might be exhibiting a picture-gallery; had grown indifferent to this *memento mori*, on which he gazed day after day and year after year. We left it all behind us. Every inch of the journey seemed to bring us nearer to the world of life and movement.

Our driver might well say "The downhill path is easy," a fact the strong little horse quite appreciated. The day was not

less brilliant than yesterday. We were surrounded by light, and very soon by warmth. The snow upon the hills sparkled and glistened like diamonds. The atmosphere was absolutely radiant. In these latitudes it is ethereal, rarefied, intoxicating; a delightful buoyancy takes possession of the spirits; imagination is vividly excited.

At the cantine history repeated itself. The girl once more came forward with the St. Bernard puppy in her arms, having evidently constituted herself its head nurse. The puppy recognised us at once. This time there was reproach, not pleading, in his eyes, and his bark was condemning.

"I pleaded with you yesterday," it said, "and pleaded in vain. It takes two to make a bargain, and I did not consent to being sold to that very commonplace individual of Martigny for 200 francs. Take advantage of this legal flaw; pay for me and take me with you. Then I shall be a truly happy dog."

Tears in the eyes and waggings of the tail emphasised the petition.

"Is it quite impossible to buy him?" we asked the girl. "You see how anxious he is—ought you not to consult his inclination a little in disposing of him? We will give you 250 francs."

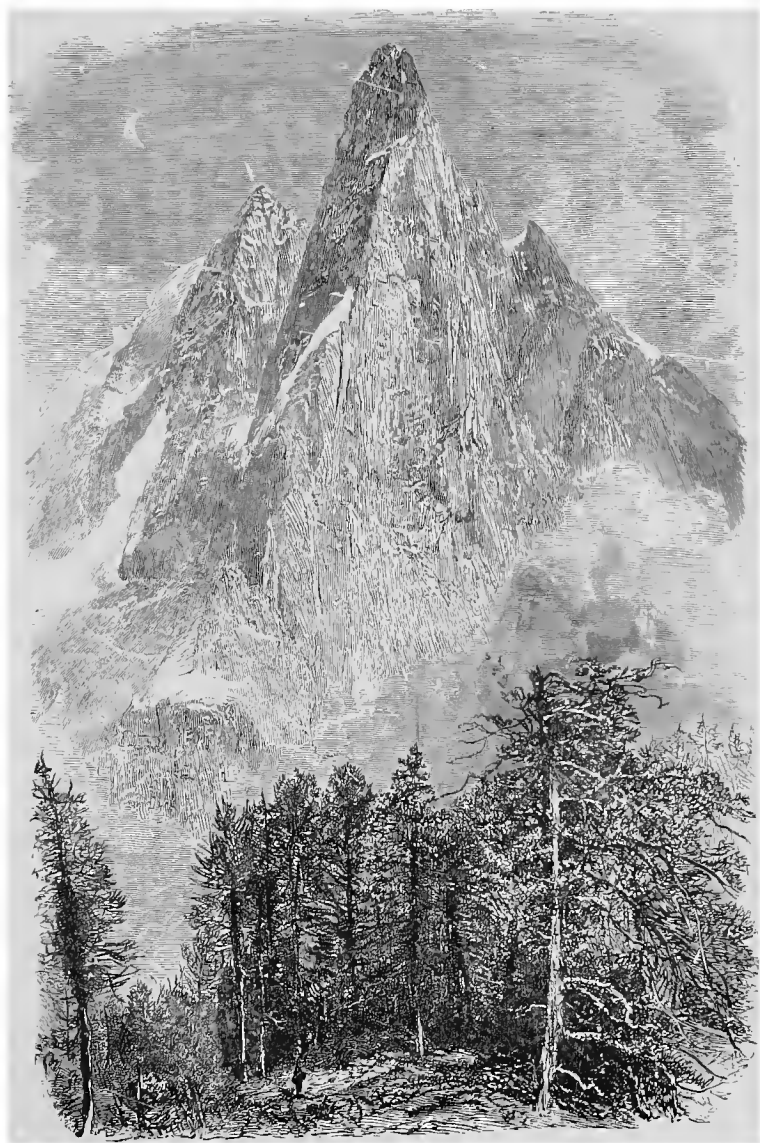
The puppy pricked up his beautiful ears, opened his mouth, breathed quickly; his eyes glistened. This bribe would surely settle the matter? But the girl was firm.

"It is impossible, monsieur. If we were to do such a thing we should lose our credit. No one would buy any more dogs from us. We could not take 500 francs if you offered them. It would not pay us to do so. And this is our very last dog of the season. No chance of another before next year."

So Bruno the puppy—his name was also Bruno—subsided into a state of melancholy. His mouth closed, his ears went down, his eyelids drooped; we thought he was about to expire.

"That is one of his tricks," said the girl; "he is only shamming. It is his way when he can't get his own will."

"Hard-hearted, miserable tyrant," cried Bruno, with a sudden bark. "I will have my revenge yet. I will take the



EARLY MORNING IN SWITZERLAND.



distemper out of pure spite and die. Life for me has no longer any charm. Then you will lose your 200 francs. Revenge is sweet."

He was but a dog after all, and must be forgiven this uncharitable sentiment. Who knows if we should not do as much under provocation? With almost tears in our own eyes we bade him good-bye. He gave us a cold, limp paw to shake, and his head went down in a lifeless manner on to the girl's arm as we turned away.

But the day was too beautiful, the air too radiant, to indulge in melancholy. We passed one after another all the points on the road with which yesterday had made us familiar. The experience of descending was almost finer than that of ascending. The mountains seemed to waltz and revolve about us, to open and close, following the turns and zigzags of the road. One moment we overlooked a deep valley, a rocky defile, with a rushing stream making music in its gloomy recesses; the next we were ourselves in the depths, overshadowed by the towering, snow-clad heights.

At last we reached Liddes, where we must part with our interesting old charioteer.

"It has been the best drive of the season," he said with elation. "I scarcely remember two more perfect days in my life. A sin to have missed the excursion. Never do I grow tired of it, but enjoy it as much as ever I did in the days of my youth. Alas! the stiffness of age is beginning to find me out, and rheumatism and lumbago warn me that I must one day go the way of all flesh. I was once the hardest mountain climber in the canton; but that is past. I shall never climb again. Now you are going in to déjeuner, messieurs, and I wish you bon appétit."

Our less interesting Martigny driver was lounging outside the inn with hands in pockets and shoulders up to his ears as we came up, and showed a sleepy pleasure at seeing us again. He had evidently spent his time in gracefully doing nothing, and was rather difficult to rouse to the fact that we should shortly require his active services. The woman who had waited upon us yesterday came forward, and placed her whole larder at our disposal, consisting of tough chicken and raw ham.

This was not tempting, and yesterday's Arcadian luncheon still dwelt in our minds; so, much to the woman's chagrin, we insisted upon repeating the order. It would save time too; for though the chicken had been cackling an hour ago, it still had to be dressed. Omelette carried the day and soon came in in triumph. It did not, however, come in alone: the woman bore with it a petition.

"Monsieur," she said, placing the dish on the table and standing at ease, "I have a favour to ask. It is not for myself," placing her hand upon her heart and drawing herself up to her full height of four feet six: "I am only the serving-woman," with a flourish of the other hand; "it is for the master and mistress of the establishment. They want to go in to Martigny to-day, and hope you will graciously accord them places on the front seat beside the driver."

We confess to being "graciously" put out by this request. If we did not grant it, we ran the risk of being considered churlish Englishmen. On the contrary, if we accepted the situation, the pleasure of the drive was at an end. With two substantial people in front of us, besides the driver, we should lose the scenery, a very important consideration; whilst our horse might fairly rebel at having to carry at least double weight for the same fare. We reflected also that the owners of the inn had their own horses and traps at command, and it was only to spare these that they had made the bold proposal.

Taking all things into consideration, we felt justified in expressing a polite regret and declining the escort. Fortunately for us the omelette had been made and the excellent Lamarque was on the table, or the chances are that, on Bruno's principle of sweet revenge, madame at the Hôtel du Cheval Blanc in Martigny would have had nothing but the foretold funeral cortège to receive when the equipage arrived at her door.

So we departed minus monsieur et madame. Our driver for a short time looked surly and depressed, having no doubt been promised an extra *pourboire*: and the comfort of the horse and the convenience of ourselves were of course very secondary considerations. But he was possibly a philosopher, and soon recovered the small amount of cheerfulness habitual to him.

At last we reached Martigny. It was four o'clock in the afternoon, and the little town was in full work. Coopers in the middle of the road were making enormous vats for next year's vendanges. Our baker's shop was open, but no fine aroma of hot bread greeted us as we passed: that was reserved for the early hours and the morning air. We wondered where Bruno's future master lived, and half regretted we had not asked his name and address, that we might offer him fifty francs for his bargain. Bruno's appealing eyes haunted us reproachfully. Madame at the hotel received us with effusion; not assumed, but born of largeness of heart. Her lively manner was in exact opposition to her daughter, who, fortunately, was calmness itself. It would never have done for one so young and beautiful to be at the same time demonstrative. H. C.'s susceptible nature would have broken up in a general disorganisation.

"You are back again, and are welcome as the sunshine," cried madame, hastening forward, in a voice that seemed to embrace all mankind in its warmth of greeting: but demonstration with her was quite safe. "And your bones are not broken," she laughed, "and the calèche has not become a hearse, nor the pleasure-excursion a funeral cortège. What did I tell you?"

She little knew how nearly it all might have happened; the narrow escape we had had at Liddes. But we told her of the bold request that had ruffled our plumes, and our regret at having to refuse it.

"You must not regret it," she replied. "Such requests have no business to be made. They are an impertinence. Five people on that calèche! You would have felt suffocated! Fancy three substantial people in front of you, shutting out all the blue sky, the hills and fresh air! Monsieur, if you have regrets, you are over-sensitive."

We felt comforted by her support. It is such a pleasure to meet with a strong, energetic mind who takes sensible views of life and things, and indorses your own course of action.

We had promised the clavendier of St. Bernard to call upon the canon at their Martigny institution. Passing up the street through the quiet little town, we reached the church in the centre of the square, which has no merit and needs no descrip-

tion. In the corner of the square was the abode of the St. Bernard order: a large, rambling building with many passages and ramifications, and apparently occupied by other fraternities and parish priests. Upstairs on every door was a card bearing the occupant's name.

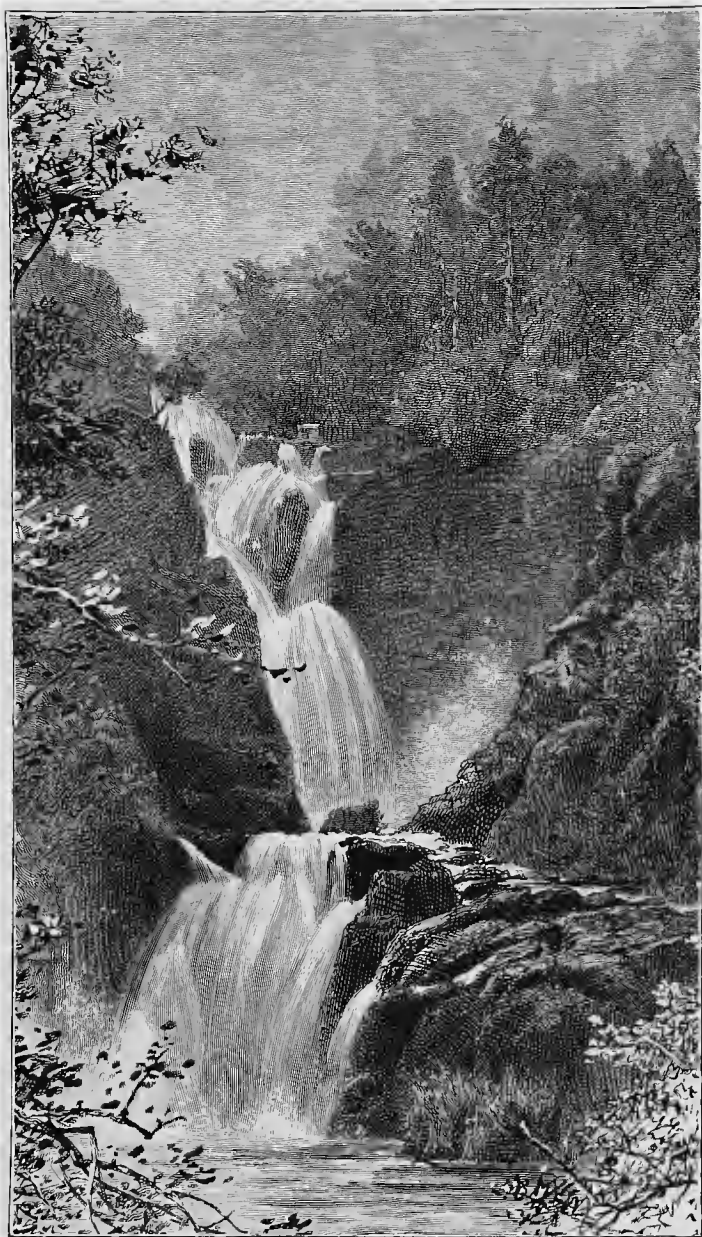
We soon found the one we were in search of. The canon was at home: a very different personage from him whom we had left at the hospice. A man of agreeable and polished manners; a man of education and of the world, who was also attached to the church at Martigny. His room was large and square, and had the grave, subdued tone of a bookworm's sanctum. The walls were hidden by well-filled shelves, the furniture was of dark oak, simply carved, the tables were heaped up with volumes: a literary untidiness that for him was no doubt full of order. "I can place my hand upon what I want in the dark," he remarked in the course of conversation. It was evident that he was an earnest student. The fruit of all this reading ripened into many a learned sermon: and we heard afterwards that he was much beloved. This we did not doubt. On the table was a bowl full to overflowing of the small coin of the country, the result of various church collections: a large amount in weight, but small in value.

We talked of the hospice; its glorious past, reduced present, uncertain future. He was very anxious about it; could not see his way to raising funds for the new building and for future sustentation. They had effected a mortgage at a somewhat high rate of interest, and how to pay that interest alone was an anxiety.

"People of all countries visit us," he remarked; "and if all countries would contribute to our funds, our anxieties would disappear."

We suggested that he should write to a few of the chief European papers, beginning with the *Times*.

"It is a delicate matter," he replied, "and I shrink from it. We are so often misunderstood in these cases. The public look upon it as begging. And there is such an enormous amount of this begging by letters, the charities, good, bad and indifferent, have become so overwhelming in number, that our remote claim would be lost in the endless list. In these days the demands



A SWISS WATERFALL.



of charity are insatiable. It is the cry of the horse-leech: Give, Give, Give! I am all for charity; the parable of the Good Samaritan seems to me to point to it as the very keystone of Christianity; but I think, sometimes, that it is almost overdone."

"You mean that so much charity leads to extravagance and misappropriation."

"I fear that human nature is prone to think too lightly of what is easily obtained," he replied, with a sad smile. "There is no doubt that charity unwisely administered, and funds foolishly wasted, are the cause of many existing evils. And in this instance, England, most charitable of all countries, takes the lead."

Our interview was soon over, and we parted with what seemed to be mutual regret. He was a manly specimen of a monk and priest; there was something noble in his air and bearing; his voice was subdued and pleasant, and his conversation much above the average of his order. It was the one little incident in our stay in Martigny, which came to an end that very same evening.

The previous day we had dined alone; to-day there seemed an accession of travellers, and we sat near an American who politely remarked that he had met us the previous day at Chamonix, and was glad to meet us again.

"Pray, sir, did you come over the Tête Noire or the Col de Balme?" he inquired.

We assured him we had done neither, and our neighbour opened his eyes.

"Then, sirs, are you travelling with a flying-machine?" he inquired, with the least suspicion of sarcasm.

Nor that either. We had spent yesterday in going up to St. Bernard, where we had passed the night. Not even a glimpse had we seen in the distance of Chamonix. The American evidently thought we were amusing ourselves at his expense.

"If it was not you I met yesterday at Chamonix, it was your astral body," he said. "I am never mistaken in a face. Did you, sir, at any time of the day or evening, feel a trance-like sensation, or lose consciousness at all?"

"We felt very frozen at the hospice," we replied, "and really only half alive."

"Ah, that was it, then," he cried. "I remember now; it was in the evening I saw you. I spoke to you, and you turned away without answering; I concluded you were deaf and dumb. It must have been your astral body. If you will forgive me for saying so, sir, you even now look a little ethereal."

We certainly did not feel so, and were making an excellent dinner. The American had evidently got mixed and was describing H. C.

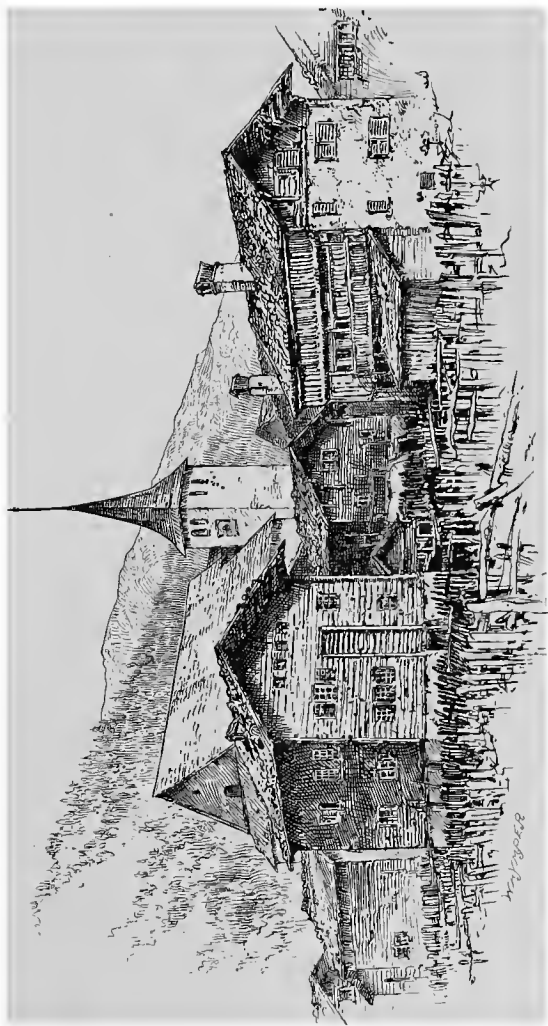
Just then there was a happy diversion in the form of an inroad in the next room. It sounded as though a company of soldiers were taking possession, and proved to be the head master of a school in Geneva, accompanied by some forty pupils with whom he was exploring the neighbourhood. He heard that we had just come from the monastery, and as we passed through the room after dinner (their own was not half over) he got up and begged leave to ask whether the roads were passable. The boys got up too, and came round us, eager and excited, and hung upon our words. Not a few were English.

We assured them the road was not only passable but admirable, the whole excursion delightful. Upon which a subdued cheer went up from forty throats and rang along the ceiling and shook the windows. Madame thought it was fire, or a riot, or the commencement of a free fight, and ran in with an alarmed expression; but when she found out that it was nothing but exuberance on the part of the boys, she raised her voice and joined in the cheer, not in the least knowing what it was all about, and ordered them extra dessert.

The boys went back to their seats, and the master decided that, weather permitting, they would make a pilgrimage on foot to the hospice, starting the next morning at seven o'clock. We wondered how the monastery would put them up for the night, where they would find provisions for this small army, and what the boys would think of the morgue. But boys revel in ghastly horrors, and the morgue would have its fascinations.

At eight o'clock the omnibus came up to take us to the railway station. There was an affectionate leave-taking on the

part of madame, regret on ours at quitting her comfortable and hospitable house. The bill had proved extremely reasonable—



IN THE RHÔNE VALLEY.

for the first and only time in Switzerland. But madame had not only a large heart, she possessed a conscience.

Darkness had long fallen when the omnibus took its way to

the station. There was nothing to be seen of the snow-capped hills and the rushing river. The train came up and went on with us. Vernayaz brought back to our recollection the Gorges du Trient, the Cascade de Salanfe, and the deluge through which we had travelled. Had the driver escaped?

At St. Maurice we waited ten minutes, and got out to find the station-master. Everything that went on at St. Maurice was reported to him; not officially, but because his interest in the daily chronicles of the place was unbounded.

"What about our driver?" we asked. "Is he yet alive?"

"Ah, monsieur! I saw him pass the station. If you had only been there to see him too! The horse was streaming—a small Niagara; the man was half drowned. 'Monsieur Joseph,' he cried, as he caught sight of me, '*rangez vous*. This is a second deluge and the end of the world.' The calèche was almost swimming. That was the worst storm in the memory of man."

"And Bruno—where is he?"

"Come and see. You have plenty of time—and the train cannot go without my signal. Let me first get a lamp."

"Whilst we buy delicacies at the buffet," we laughed. "We must have presents in our hands for that prince of dogs."

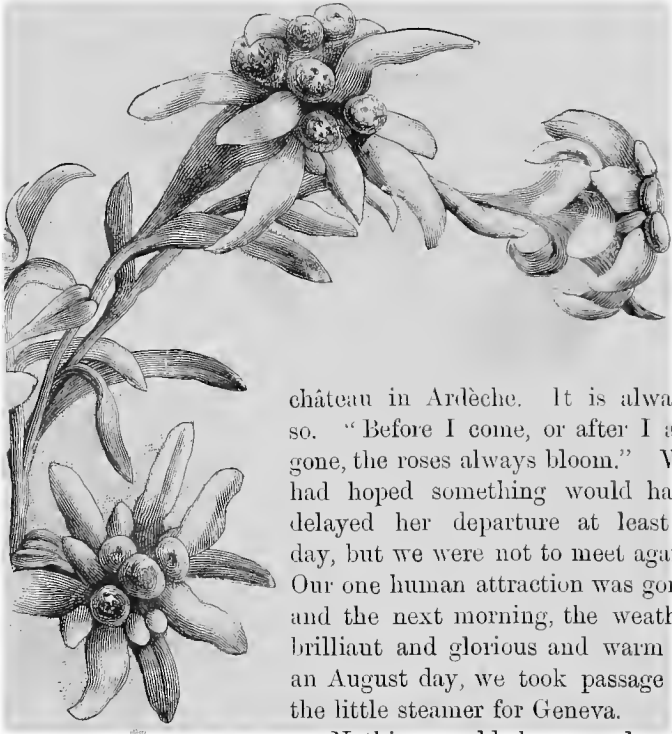
In a few moments a small procession of three was crossing the road in the darkness, lighted by the solitary lantern. Before we reached Bruno he knew us; knew our voice and footstep; there was no mistaking it. He sprang out of his kennel, and again it seemed that he must break his chain. We thought he would have devoured us, as he barked and raved and woke the echoes of the neighbourhood.

"I never saw him take to anyone like this before," said the station-master. "What does it mean, Bruno?"

Bruno evidently thought his hour had come and we were there to take him away. When we made our offering he would not look at it, but raved and capered and begged to be unloosed. That was all he cared about—to go out into the world with us. It went to our heart that we could not take him. We placed our offering near his kennel, and after we had gone out of sight and sound it would be a consolation. The station-master lighted us back to the train and gave the signal.

Montreux at last, and our old quarters at the Grand Hotel—not more comfortable than madame's hospitable inn at Martigny, but the tariff—how different!

We were only remaining there the night. On asking for the little old lady who had captivated us in the Castle of Chillon we learned that she had left that morning for her



THE EDELWEISS.

château in Ardèche. It is always so. "Before I come, or after I am gone, the roses always bloom." We had hoped something would have delayed her departure at least a day, but we were not to meet again. Our one human attraction was gone, and the next morning, the weather brilliant and glorious and warm as an August day, we took passage in the little steamer for Geneva.

Nothing could be more lovely.

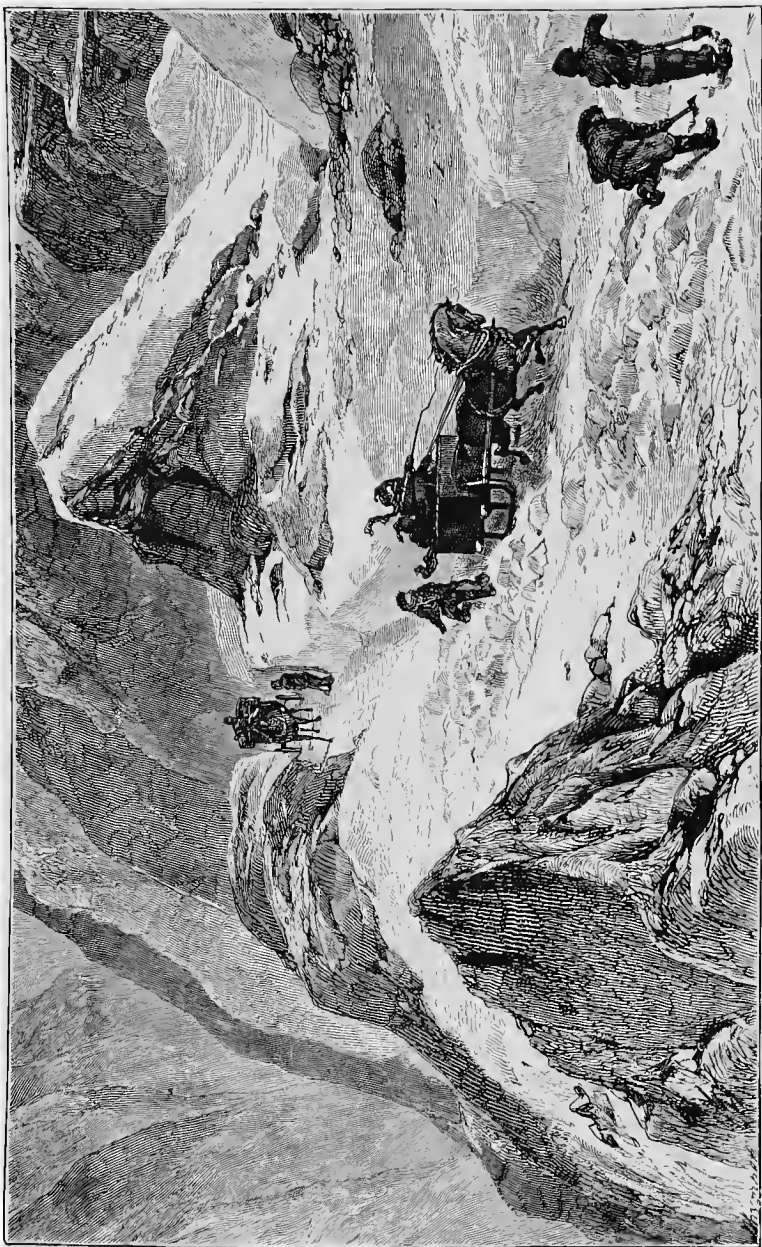
The blueness of the lake rivalled the far-off skies. Not a cloud or the faintest wreath of mist hung about the mountains. The Dent du Midi stood out in all its splendour. The grey walls of Chillon were reflected in the calm water, its towers and turrets sharply outlined against the background of hills. Again we thought of the *oubliette*, the spiral staircase and the pointed knives—and shuddered. And again came before us the appealing image of

the refined and beautiful old lady, who, we felt sure, had circumstances permitted, would have become our firm friend. With quite a feeling of excitement we saw the train far up the mountain leave Glion and go on its way towards the Rochers de Naye. Oh, to be there in such weather!

We had quite a long day before us upon the lake, and for a time nothing could be more delightful. The steamer stopped frequently at places that have become household words to most of us: Clarens, Vevey, Lausanne, Morges. The day was so calm, the lake so clear, that we saw two worlds: one above the water, one below it: and the reflections were as vivid and life-like as the realities, and more poetical. Our human freight changed frequently. Many a town and village was wonderfully picturesque with mediæval outlines; ancient fortresses and turreted castles that had played their part in a world that is receding from us and growing very faint and shadowy. Lausanne stretched far up the slopes, and in the distance the cathedral towers were outlined. Morges, with its old castle, ancient harbour, and romantic associations, was especially interesting. Here, as we glided gently over the smooth surface of the water, we thought we saw far down the pile-city of the Lake-dwellers, and fancied we heard voices speaking, church bells ringing. Of course it was all imagination, but sufficient to plunge us into a dream of that strange story of the past.

As the afternoon wore on, the lake widened and lost its immediate charm; the air grew chilly; and when towards five o'clock Geneva came in sight, we were glad that the journey was at an end.

Approaching from the water its outlines are sufficiently commonplace; but we had formed no very exalted ideas of its beauty and were not likely to be disappointed. Geneva is essentially a city of to-day. Fifty years ago it was a small place with mean and narrow streets, unwholesome and unattractive. During this half century it has been almost entirely rebuilt. Few towns have had more uninterrupted prosperity. All the world and his wife have visited, and visit, Geneva. Least attractive of all Swiss towns, it is the central point towards which all radiate. Nor can we wonder, for if its attractions are small, its historical atmosphere is full of interest.



ALPINE PASS.



The quays are lined with strictly modern outlines ; enormous houses and hotels common to the end of the nineteenth century. Immediately facing the landing-stage was one of the largest of the hotels, the Beau Rivage. It ranks amongst the first, but we thought it dear and uncomfortable.

The steamer glided up the lake towards the landing-stage and Rousseau's Island, and under the trees we caught sight of the outlines of the bust of that strange man, with his complicated nature ; full of poetical aspirations and lofty intentions, if we may believe him, joined to a weakness of purpose and frailty of temperament which left him helpless in the face of every temptation.

It was the last days of the exhibition, and in the evening we made our way to it. The constantly wet summer had shorn it of its financial success, and the town bewailed the event. It was admirably got up, and many of its departments were very interesting. One of the sections was a representation of an ancient Swiss village: old houses, old shops with mediæval wares presided over by people in costume. In the centre of an artificial green people danced to the music of an old-fashioned orchestra, and in a room brilliantly lighted the heated dancers quaffed beer and sweet decoctions out of quaint goblets. It was an excellent delusion and a very pretty scene. Business was over, and the young men and women in their costumes from the different stalls and houses joined in the dance. There were plenty of electric lights to show up the animated if not graceful movements of the dancers ; and overhead there were the bright stars in the dark, solemn, reposeful heavens.

As for the exhibition itself, everything in the way of machinery and invention seemed represented. Especially we were struck with the magnificent silks and lace exhibited ; silks outrivalling the finest efforts of Lyons and Spitalfields, and lace that exceeded Honiton, and in beauty and refinement equalled Brussels. Here, if she will, Switzerland has a great future before her. Electric trams ran through the grounds ; illuminated fountains, white and coloured, played in all parts. It was the Paris exhibition over again on a small scale. Swiss enterprise had been at work, and the steady summer downpour must have proved very discouraging.

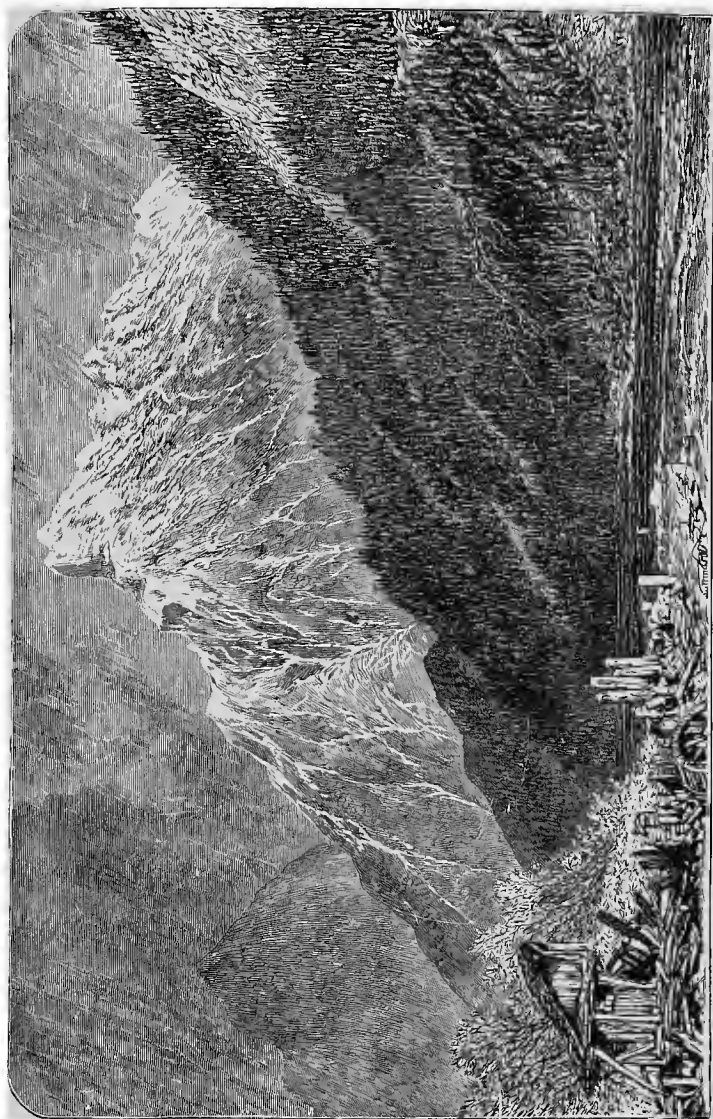
All the same, Switzerland flourishes; and, thanks to her reputation, her mountains, glaciers, lakes, all her matchless charm and beauty, she will ever flourish; waxing rich.

Geneva, we have said, has been for the most part rebuilt the last half century; looking at her enormous houses and hotels, her tree-lined thoroughfares, one might say in the last ten years. But there still remains a small part of the upper town that is ancient. Of this, the cathedral is the centre, the latter much spoilt by its eighteenth century Corinthian portico.

It is impossible to walk these old streets of the past without feeling surrounded by that little crowd of people who have made Geneva for ever famous. Calvin, Beza, Farel, Knox, Voltaire, Rousseau, Necker, Madame de Staël, Casaubon, Lacandolle, Huber, Sismondi, Bonivard, D'Aubigné—why multiply names? And then there are a few names to cast a reflection upon the greatness of some of these—such names as Castell and Servetus.

The streets seem haunted by that great crowd of reformers and literary stars. Their shadowy forms surround one. You pass the houses, some of them inhabited, and ghostly faces peer at you through the old windows, and ghostly forms glide through the open doorways. You enter an old-fashioned room and hear Farel threatening Calvin with the wrath of Heaven if he will not make their cause his own. Calvin trembles and yields. You enter the cathedral, and the building rings with the voice of Calvin, his presence fills the pulpit; his eloquence, earnestness, and indomitable will carry the people with him; a rushing stream sweeps down all obstruction. Whatever his views and opinions, he was a man raised up for the times; and to him and his band of reformers Protestantism owes an undying debt.

How interesting were his times, how singular many of the details of his life. From his earliest childhood there seems to have been an unconscious power about him that influenced others whether they would or no. He was born in 1509 at Noyon in Picardy: Picardy with its harsh, uninteresting people, shrill of voice and commonplace in aspect; where the unrelenting east winds blow freely, with a corresponding effect upon this people of the northern province.



DENT DU MIDI, FROM THE LAKE OF GENEVA.



But there was no east wind about Calvin, and the noble family of Mormor were so taken with the boy that they in part adopted him.

Through them he enjoyed exceptional educational privileges. At the age of fourteen, he went to Paris with them and became a student at the Collège de la Marche. His manner was grave and self-contained. He delighted in study, and cared nothing for the ordinary amusements of youth. His mental powers were far beyond his age, and he became a profound Latin scholar. Amongst his companions, who admired him in spite of his want of sympathy with their ways and walks, he was called "l'Accusatif." All through life there was something strong and attractive about Calvin, but never lovable, and one deploras the few passages of harshness and hatred that stand out as blots upon the character of one who was singularly self-denying, earnest and anxious for the welfare of others, ready to sacrifice himself for the good of his cause.

From Paris he went to Orleans to read law. Here he would sit up half the night in study, rising early the next morning : habits which fatally undermined his health. Of a religious tone of mind from a boy, at Orleans he began to study the Scriptures, and very soon decided to throw up law and enter the Church. He went to Bourges, and under Wolmer, who so greatly influenced him, became as great a scholar in Greek as he already was in Latin. Here, young as he was, he began to preach the Reformed doctrines. Born a Romanist, he became an eager and earnest Protestant.

In 1533 he returned to Paris, then in a state of intense religious excitement through the preaching of Farel and Lefevre. The Queen of Navarre, sister of Francis I., was in strong sympathy with the Reform movement. Had the king been of the same mind, who knows but that France might have shaken off the Papal yoke once and for ever ?

And for a time it seemed that Francis would let things take their course. He was a strange mixture of good and evil ; gay and voluptuous, yet capable of great heroism ; ambitious and not wanting in courage and energy. He had had his "Battle of the Giants" in reconquering Milan, when the poor Swiss lost 12,000 men ; had contended for the crown of

Germany with Charles of Spain, and lost it; had gone through his famous interview with Henry of England on the Field of the Cloth of Gold—which only ended in Henry's forming a temporary alliance with Charles and the Pope. The gallant Bayard was knighted by Francis on the field of Marignano after the Battle of the Giants, and later on lost his life at the passage of the Sesia in the retreat of the French army across the Alps, at its second expedition into Italy. He had been taken captive by Charles, who released him with the loss of Flanders and Artois, the Duchy of Burgundy, and all his Italian possessions—a rich ransom; had formed his abhorred alliance with the Turks and brought down upon him the wrath of Europe.

With all these momentous matters in hand, past and present, it almost seemed that the Reform preachers would have their way unmolested. But Francis suddenly awoke from his religious lethargy, and perhaps for the sake of opposition, took strong measures against the movement.

The Reformers had to fly for their lives. Calvin escaped through a window by means of a sheet, and then put on the disguise of a vine-dresser. Persecution raged against the Protestants throughout France: to find its culminating point twenty years later under that vilest of women, Catherine de Medici.

Calvin for a time wandered about, finally going to Basel, where he issued his famous Preface to Francis. Seldom has an address of remonstrance been couched in more vigorous and glowing terms, and it has remained one of the chief documents of the Reformation. Unfortunately it had no effect upon Francis, and the persecution of the Protestants went on.

After visiting Italy, Calvin, at the request of his enthusiastic friend Tillet, went to Geneva. His arrival was made known to the still more devoted Farel, who had also escaped from Paris. In those Paris days Farel had thought highly of Calvin. He was far more struck with him now, and resolved to keep him near him if possible. Calvin was the stronger nature of the two. Farel feared his own powers were failing, and felt that only Calvin could succeed him. But Calvin's desire just then was for a life of retirement and contemplation; devoting

himself to the cause of the Reformation indirectly rather than actively. Farel, however, prevailed.

Calvin was a man of earnest purpose. Having put his hand to the plough, he threw his whole soul into the work and soon astonished Farel by his success.

The marvellous changes proceeded with the rapidity almost of a revival. Geneva had just thrown off the yoke of the Dukes of Savoy, thus breaking the link with Rome. The times were ripe for the Reformer, and the people eagerly embraced Protestantism. A Protestant Confession of Faith was drawn up and proclaimed in the Cathedral church of St. Peter's, a vast concourse of people accepting it. Vice and frivolity gave place to gravity of demeanour and religious observances.

Then came a reaction. The reform was too sudden. A certain section of the people, called Libertins—or men of Liberty—rebelled, and grew so strong in power that once more Calvin had to fly from Geneva—or rather was expelled from it. He went to Strasburg, devoted himself to study, and married a widow: but death soon dissolved the happy marriage, and though a young man, he never married again.

Three years passed away. During all this time the people of Geneva were gradually repenting their conduct to Calvin. Everything had gone wrong; the Libertins proved themselves unable to govern; disorder reigned. They begged Calvin to return, and he did so, this time to remain. His rule was established, though not without opposition. For fifteen years the Libertins opposed him to the utmost. At last, after a semi-riot in the streets, accompanied by more noise than bloodshed, the leaders were driven from the city and burnt in effigy. The town had peace.

Other disputes would occasionally arise, some of which were conducted with more zeal than discretion. One's sympathies go out to his old friend Castellio, whom in his religious fervour he persecuted.

He had found Castellio at Strasburg, had admired his learning, bewailed his poverty. He it was who brought Castellio to Geneva, and gave him a post in the city. Then their religious views came into conflict, and Calvin, intolerant

and narrow-minded, could permit no departure from his own firmly-rooted convictions. He became terribly bitter against Castellio, and in the end drove him from the city.

It is a sad record. We have a vision of Castellio, aged and grey-headed, living in extreme poverty in Basel. We see him gathering sticks on the banks of the Rhine, to light his fire or earn a few halfpence. And we hear the bitterness of Calvin still pursuing him and declaring that Castellio was guilty of robbery.

Still more sad was the history of Servetus, or Servede, in the language of his native Aragon.

Servetus was so quarrelsome and impetuous that he was always in trouble. Having first made himself notorious by his irreligious views, he proceeded to Paris and took up the study of medicine, passing with honours. He is said to have been the first to guess at the circulation of the blood. Getting into trouble with the Faculty, he left Paris and came into contact with Calvin, challenging his doctrines and advancing his own, which were full of error. He was brought to trial and sentenced to be burnt, a sentence altogether without defence.

Servetus escaped, and for a time lived in Provence, supporting himself by writing. After this, on his way to Italy, he had the folly to pass through Geneva, actually appearing in church. He was recognised, and Calvin caused him to be arrested.

Again he was tried, the trial lasting two months, was found guilty, and again sentenced to be burnt. Then Calvin endeavoured to have the sentence changed to imprisonment or banishment, but unsuccessfully. The very next day Servetus was bound to the stake; his heretical works were thrown upon the piles of wood, and he died in great agony: a blot upon the times of the Reformation, a reproach to its leaders, of whom Calvin was the foremost.

From this time Calvin's influence was greater than ever. It reached not only his immediate surroundings, but extended to many parts of Europe. His name was powerful, and he acted with great wisdom and discretion. It must be said of him that in all he did, he was firmly convinced of the righteous-

ness of his cause. He never sinned against his conscience; never even parleyed with it, or spared himself. Never strong, his untiring zeal, energy and activity were extraordinary. If he made mistakes they were few and far between. Such incidents as those of Castellio and Servetus were rare. The good he did to the Protestant cause was incalculable. He had to fight against tremendous foes, the bitterest opposition, and he triumphed over all. He was a man more to be feared than to be loved, but from his intellectual greatness he no doubt felt himself separated from most of his companions, and from his boyhood had always shown himself indifferent to friendship. His whole life and soul and devotion lay in his cause, for which indeed he shortened his days. When health began to fail he would not relax his efforts. For two years strength of will and determination of character supported him: and then on the 27th May, 1564, the end came.

His strong personality still seems to haunt the old streets of Geneva, just as his religious teaching and influence remain.

And passing beyond those streets to the heights above, we reach the spot where Servetus was martyred. It was the autumn of the year, when the trees were turning brown and the leaves were dying: Nature was in harmony with the inhuman sacrifice. It was just such a scene as we gazed upon one morning, also in the autumn of the year.

Far below us the two rivers ran their course: the Rhône and the Arne. A little farther on and there came the wedding of the waters, the two rivers becoming one. For seventy miles it pursues its course through the wonderful Rhône valley, until, reaching the ancient town of Lyons, its emerald waters run side by side with the turbid Saône.

To our right stretched the Lake of Geneva, surrounded by the town. In the distance uprose the glorious snow-capped mountains, their outlines melting into the blue of the sky: a sky so lofty, so serene, it seemed impossible that it had ever looked upon a human sacrifice or listened to the cries of a death-agony. Behind us were the trees of a lovely wood full of rich and varied tints, where the birds chirped their autumn song. We had the whole scene to ourselves.

From this point Geneva appeared even interesting and

romantic. We looked down upon a multitude of roofs, softened outlines rendered slightly hazy as the blue smoke rose and lost itself in the pure air. On the lake a few white-winged boats were gliding about, small steamers went to and fro. But we were above all sound and disturbing elements. Far below was Rousseau's Island, and here we felt was a scene that Rousseau loved, the contemplation of which must have appealed to all his better nature.



## CHAPTER V.

A quaint couple—Bourg—La dame du buffet—Notre Dame de Brou—Margaret of Austria—Rare monuments—Ceramic art—M. Louis Bozonnet—Alexandre Dumas—Great storm—Hôtel de l'Europe—Madame loquacious but capable—Lyons—Vanished charms—St. Martin d'Aunay—Church of the early centuries—Lyons' masterpiece—Pothinus and Blandina—Present prosperity—A magic atmosphere—Change of plans—Strange journey—Nightmare—Black country of France—St. Etienne—Le Puy—Curious old inn—The next morning—A first impression—Charming upper town—Cathedral—Romanesque work—Cloisters—Rocher de Corneille—Superb view—Temple of Diana—St. Michel d'Aiguilhe—Old custodian—Climbing the rock—Wonderful gem—Church of St. Laurent—Du Guesclin—Sisters of Mercy—Gothic courtyard—Another gem—"We are women"—Château de Polignac—Custodian—A long pedigree—Happy family—Temple of Apollo.

WE left Geneva one fine morning with all its atmosphere historical and mystic.

The train passed through lovely scenes on its way to Bourg, where we intended to stay some hours for the sake of seeing the famous Eglise de Brou. Two quaint and curious old people shared the carriage; a little old man and a little old woman. Both looked withered and shrivelled, yet there was something interesting about their faces: an expression of human sympathy and kindness on his part; a pathetic, appealing look on hers. It was easy to see that life had not been a bed of roses with them. They had evidently suffered; evidently walked through life together, sharing each other's burdens, and probably helping to bear the burdens of others.

So much their expression told us, but it could go no further; a broad outline, the details of which could not be filled in. They conversed in undertones, as though the atmosphere of peace and repose about them must not be disturbed by anything beyond a murmur. One felt that the rattle of the carriage, the click-clack of the train, must be purgatory to

souls so serene. In the scenery they took intense interest, though they said they had lived with it all their lives ; but they evidently loved all things beautiful.

And beautiful indeed were the mountains, vales and little rivers amidst which the train took its winding course. We ascended the Rhône Valley towards Nantua, with its picturesque lake. Here we had entered the French Jura, with a right to feel at home on our native soil. At La Cluse our little people



CHALET, NEAR GENEVA.

alighted. He helped his wife very carefully out of the carriage ; they bade us good-bye with the graceful little ceremonies the French are so fond of using, and walked away arm in arm very quietly and composedly.

We continued our journey by the broad river side, through gorges, under the very shadow of precipitous rocky hills, until at length, in the centre of a great plain, we reached Bourg.

The hour for déjeuner had arrived, and madame at the buffet, who was equal to a public dinner, not to speak of a small

luncheon, received us with a gracious curtesy twice repeated, relieved us of coats, baggage and every impedimenta, which she took under her special protection; and then, placing before us a simple collation, to which H. C. did ample justice, directed us on our way.

The town was more uninteresting than we had anticipated from its history. This ancient capital of La Bresse ought to have possessed many vestiges of the past, many antique remains. In the thirteenth century it belonged to the House of Savoy. Francis I.—that monarch of contradictions—took it in 1538; and in 1600 it finally became French. It is a town of some 16,000 inhabitants, and there is nothing to indicate how they live. No special trade distinguishes it. In the quiet streets the weaver's shuttle is never heard; factory chimneys are conspicuous by their absence. The place is dull and depressing; here and there grass grows between the stones.

Certainly the day we visited it was a Sunday, and so we saw it dressed in its best. Though liking to make Sunday a day of rest, on this occasion we had to yield to circumstances and make it a day of travelling. The people were all at leisure. Women sat at their doors basking in the sunshine, gossiping and discussing the affairs of the nation over *Le Petit Journal*. Groups of men in blue smock frocks, and women in clean white caps and shawls, passed down the country roads carrying great red and green umbrellas.

Our own special object in being here, as we have said, was to visit the church of Notre Dame de Brou. This was outside the town, in the Faubourg St. Nicholas. As madame at the buffet had declared in giving us minute directions, it was impossible to miss the way: and so in due time we found ourselves facing this *Monument historique*.

Of course disappointment was our first impression. It was being elaborately restored, and part of it was boarded up, all the north side hideous with scaffolding. The west front was so renewed that it might have been a work of to-day. Yet we had expected to find it untouched: had been told that no workman's brush, chisel or hammer had desecrated it for three centuries.

The church dates from the early fifteenth century, and is late

Gothic influenced by Renaissance; the result being not very satisfactory. It is large and spacious, and one feels how fine it might have been if built a century or two earlier. The whole interior looks new and modern and is very deficient in tone, a garish light spoiling all. The church was built by Margaret of Austria, daughter of Maximilian and wife of Philibert le Beau, Duke of Savoy. Margaret had been created by her father Governor of the Netherlands, and possessed considerable power. The church arose in fulfilment of a vow made by her mother-in-law, Margaret of Bourbon.

Its simple interior would be striking and effective but for its modern tone. But it possesses rare treasures—the most splendid monuments in France—which well repay a visit. Amongst them is that of Margaret, with her motto *Fortune—Infortune—Forte une*—of which the sense is easily gathered. Nevertheless we asked the suisse—who was rather above his order—the exact meaning of the words; the local or traditional interpretation. “Ah, monsieur,” he replied, looking very wise, “on ne sait pas; *c’est perdu dans l’obscurité!*”

The central tomb, most magnificent of all, is that of Philibert, Margaret’s husband. Below he is represented as dying, above as dead. It is profusely enriched with angels, with pillars and statuettes, all wonderfully carved. Most beautiful is the rood screen, and the stalls of the choir are rich and elaborate. There is a little good painted glass in the chapels, but not sufficient to influence the interior.

Not far from the church we found a wonderful worker in ceramic art: a Monsieur Louis Bozonnet: who, from drawings, verbal descriptions, ancient fragments and mosaics, reproduces ancient vases: Greek, Roman, Ethiopian, Egyptian. These we found quite artistic works. His patrons are from all countries, all ranks of life. One of his earliest friends was Alexandre Dumas père, of whom he showed us many letters. Once Dumas had spent a week under his roof; had written there part of one of his works; and the chair and table, inkstand and pen he used were religiously preserved; making our visit—in conjunction with the letters—doubly interesting. The room was so small that Dumas’ portly presence must have half filled it.

Of the vases we bought, the following descriptions of two of them will give some idea of this real artist's work :

"No. 44. Reconstitution d'après un dessin antique (archéologique, Primard) d'une paire de vases de Galbe, Pompéien. Ce modèle, dont le temps n'a conservé aucun type, et qui conséquemment ne se rencontre dans aucun musée, fut l'un des plus intéressants spécimens du bel art de la céramique, durant la période impériale, où de tels vases étaient créés en Italie par des Céramistes Grecs lesquels importaient de leur patrie les argiles et les engobes dont ils se servaient. Les quatre personnages incrustés, un sur chacune des faces, symbolisent le peuple romain : le Patriciat, la Législation, l'Armée, et les Arts. Le premier exemplaire de cette reconstitution a été rétabli à Canum-Brou pour Madame la Comtesse de Pierreclos, la nièce de Lamartine, à qui elle les donna."

"No. 28. Vases lacrymatoires, Gréco-Corinthiens, reconstitution d'après un seul fragment. Le triomphe de la ligne serpentine. Le plus simple, mais le plus beau, le plus pur et le plus esthétique des vases antiques. Argile grise rosée d'une grande finesse ; engobe noir très lustré de Corinthe ; incrustations en argile rouge de Sicile, représentant un prêtre et une femme (peut-être la veuve)."

Our examination of these artistic objects of the remote ages took up so much time that, when we left, the shades of evening were falling.

But a change had also come over the sky. It was now obscured by dark clouds rolling up in dense masses, ominous and threatening. As we hurried into the town, blinding flashes of lightning followed each other in quick succession, and seemed to run about the heavens. A more portentous appearance we had never seen. The thunder rolled and crashed with terrific sound. Women screamed and crossed themselves, and ran into open doorways for protection. Even the men looked startled.

Then, just as we reached the Hôtel de l'Europe, down came the rain in a perfect sheet. In a few moments the streets were flooded : the water ran down like a small river. As we watched this phenomenal storm from the windows, madame entertained us with her experiences. How her heart was in her ménage,

and she and her daughters did all they could to make their visitors comfortable. How in the summer-time—one would hardly believe it, perhaps—they were often crowded with visitors who came to see Notre Dame de Brou, and would remain two or three days exploring the interesting neighbourhood. How once she had travelled as far as London, and the only thing she could clearly remember to have seen was London Bridge. She had rushed back to France affrayed at the distance which separated her from her beloved pays. On reaching Bourg (generally pronounced *Bourk* in the neighbourhood), she had burnt a hundred candles to Ste. Anne and made a little pilgrimage to a shrine that was not very far off. She hoped never to return to England. Voyaging was not in her line: she preferred being at the head of her house, where she had a certain importance. And that reminded her that if we wished to catch the evening train to Lyons, we must dine without delay.

Excellent the dinner madame prepared, and moderate her charges. When it was over, and the bill had been paid, and madame hoped we should return next summer (“*les excursions de l’hôtel en valaient la peine*”), we departed.

The storm had been short as severe, and the skies were again clear. Madame at the buffet was on the look-out for us; hoped we had had a pleasant time; had not been too much agitated by the storm. Then, handing us our luggage, and with another twofold curtesy and a bon voyage, she took her leave of us on the platform. The train came puffing up out of the darkness, and took us away again into the darkness; and about eleven o’clock at night deposited us safely in Lyons.

It was long since we had visited the old town, dear to us from many a recollection and for the sake of others who had passed into the Silent Land.

We could see little that night as we walked across the great square to the inn, and after our long day’s pilgrimage were more inclined for rest than observation. It seemed a very long time since we had left Geneva in the early morning.

Our chief object in coming here was to go down the Rhône by boat, but in this we were to be disappointed. It was not to be done. The next day we renewed our acquaintance with Lyons, but whatever charm the place may once have possessed

seemed to have vanished. True, its rivers still flowed side by side, and nothing could take from the beauty and stateliness of the Rhône, or clear the turbid waters of its sister Saône. But the town itself seemed to have lost every vestige of antiquity. The streets were all new; a commercial element was everywhere visible; people hurried to and fro as though the flying moments were golden. In vain we looked for the ancient weavers' houses, listened for the sound of the shuttle; perhaps they are still to be heard and seen, but we never found them; never found anything half so interesting or picturesque as a pale weaver at his loom.

Of course there is much about the town that is stately, but it is all modern and commonplace. We went up to the heights of Fourvières, hoping to see that magnificent view, the chain of the Alps stretching far down into Italy with Monte Rosa for its crowning splendour; but mists hung about the mountains and valleys, and they were invisible. Seldom indeed does the view present itself in all its glory. On a clear day one hundred miles off rises Mont Blanc. To the south are the Dauphiné Alps and the mountains of the Grande Chartreuse, the great Mont Pilat not very far off. At our feet, as it were, the two majestic rivers run their course until we see them flowing into each other and mingling their waters.

One church interested us extremely, the church of St. Martin d'Aunay, where we felt ourselves once more in an old and romantic world. Of both Pagan and Christian antiquity, and of the greatest interest, it was founded as far back as the sixth century on the site of a temple erected to the goddess Roma and in honour of Augustus by the sixty nations or tribes of Gaul. Here at that time was the confluence of the rivers. Augustus lived for three years in Lyons. In the tenth century the church was rebuilt in the Romanesque style; the crypt dates from the ninth century; but a monastery existed at a much earlier date.

A young acolyte took us into the dungeons beneath the sacristy, where Pothinus and Blandina were confined before their martyrdom in the year 170. The sorrows of these Christian martyrs are recorded in an epistle of the churches of Vienne and Lyons to the Brethren in Asia and Phrygia.

Pothinus was Bishop of Lyons and upwards of ninety years old when he was thrown into this dungeon, where in two days death set him free; but Blandina, a converted slave, younger and more enduring, was put to torture. After being scourged and exposed to fire in an iron chair she was thrown to the beasts in the amphitheatre. The cells are without light and air, below the level of the river, and could only be entered by crawling in upon hands and knees.

Lyons had already existed for some centuries when this took place. It was first founded in the year 560 B.C., but little is heard of it until the year 41 B.C. Later on Augustus made it the capital of Celtic Gaul. Claudius was born here and made it a Roman colony. Nero rebuilt it after it had been destroyed by fire. St. Pothinus was its first Christian Bishop, and Blandina was one of his converts.

Then came the invasion of the barbarians, and Lyons knew little peace until, at the end of the tenth century, it gave itself up to the King of France. Peace and war, reverses and prosperity, such was the record of Lyons for many succeeding centuries, but on the whole it was a condition of progress. In the days of the Revolution it suffered much, was partly, and would have been entirely destroyed but for Robespierre's timely end. Since then it has enjoyed almost uninterrupted prosperity. Its silk manufactures alone approach the value of £20,000,000. Here Claudius was born, Marcus Aurelius, Caracalla and Geta, Irenæus, St. Ambrose, and many great men of modern times. But the present is represented by its commerce and manufactures; and of the past scarce a trace remains excepting this church of St. Martin d'Aunay.

Its three doorways have pointed arches, and its central cupola is supported by four granite columns, supposed to consist of two ancient Roman columns cut in half, and said to have belonged to the altar erected by the sixty Gallic tribes. The nave and double aisles are vaulted and supported by double columns. The church is small, but, as we have said, here we have a true atmosphere of the past, with distinct Pagan and Christian traces, where we are glad to take refuge from the commonplace streets of the town, the modern, prosy atmosphere, the hard, uncompromising outlines. Here one lingers and dreams,

visions of Rome and Roman influence rising up before one. We stand in the centre of the Forum Vetus erected by Trajan—who built for the ages to come; we realise all the Christian persecutions of Marcus Aurelius, the still greater persecutions of Severus; we pass into the dungeons, and see Blandina closing the eyes of Pothinus in death, herself calm and serene,



AN OLD CORNER IN LE PUY.

sustained by divine strength; we hear the roar of the wild beasts in the amphitheatre, and see a stream of martyrs passing to the Life Eternal. In this little church we are enveloped in a magic atmosphere and steeped in the influences of the past.

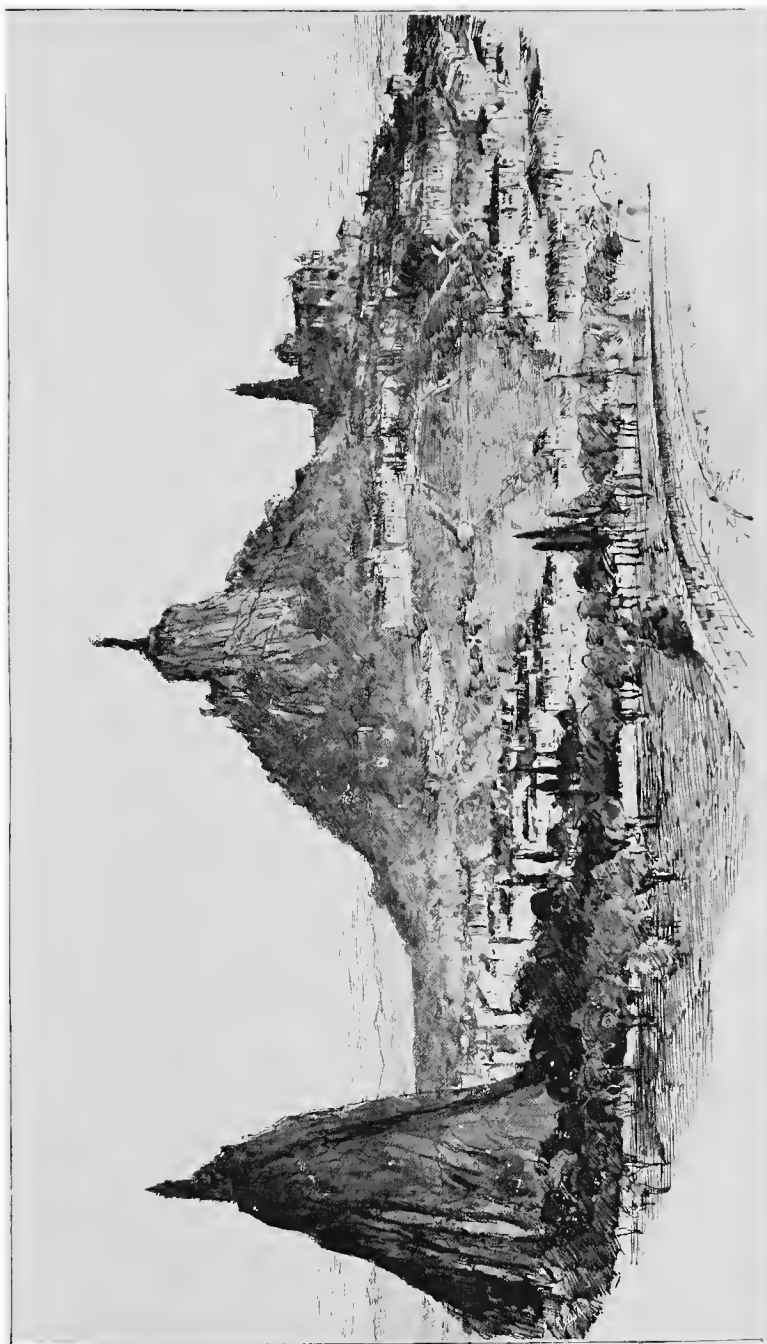
We had come to Lyons, as we have said, with the wish to go down the Rhône by boat, hoping to be able to break our journey at various places, and take perhaps a week in the

transit. This proved to be impossible. Boats ran seldom in the autumn of the year, they started at unearthly hours, before daylight, in cold and misty mornings; there would be much discomfort and little pleasure in carrying out the idea.

Therefore we changed our plans, and for a brief interval abandoned the lovely Valley of the Rhône, and took a cross-country train through Central France, to a place we had long wished to see: Le Puy, in the volcanic region of the Velay, the romantic and little-known district of Auvergne, with its extinct volcanoes, the sharp, eccentric and pointed outlines of its hills.

We left Lyons one sunny afternoon, glad to escape from its prosy atmosphere, though for a time the atmosphere was hardly a change for the better. That journey has left upon us the influence of a dream, partly of a nightmare. We quickly passed into the regions of coal mines and factories. The train ran through a valley in which everything was black as Erebus; scenes worthy of Pandemonium, yet with a weird fascination about them. Tall chimneys sent forth dense volumes of smoke; tongues of flame shot forth from innumerable furnaces; the workmen going to and fro looked veritable imps incarnate.

As daylight faded, the effect was even more startling; a black world, with fiery furnaces seven times heated. The line is the oldest in France, and the small stations we came to looked dirty and antiquated. But there had been a fair or fête in that part of the country, and presently we found the stations crammed to suffocation with a crowd that fought and surged and clambered for seats. Not a tithe could find room. No respect was paid to compartments, whether 1st, 2nd or 3rd. A railway-key kept our own fairly free: but as fate would have it, at the last moment up came the guard at St. Chamond, opened the door, and let in a flood of cattle-drovers. We had fallen from the frying-pan into the fire. It was a very awful experience. The men, hardly human, shouted and raved and wrangled, as such men do, and spoke a language perfectly unintelligible; once or twice we thought they were going to commit murder, but nothing was further from their intention. We wished for the end, but the end was long in coming. Three parts of the people certainly never reached home that night, for the company had not made the smallest extra provision for



LE PUY.



them. They remained in the stations or wandered disconsolately about the neighbourhood.

St. Etienne was passed with its enormous area of coal-fields, yielding some 4,000,000 tons a year. Side by side with these coal-fields, and great works showing their fiery furnaces and factories where they make firearms, are immense ribbon manufactories, so that they say in the neighbourhood: "*Les ateliers de Mars se trouvent à côté de ceux de Vénus.*"

Darkness fell and veiled all the characteristic scenery through which we travelled. It was very late when at last we reached Le Puy, glad to be at our journey's end. The hotel omnibus was in waiting, and we had it to ourselves. In Lyons we had been recommended the *Hôtel des Diplomates*, but were afterwards told it was not the best.

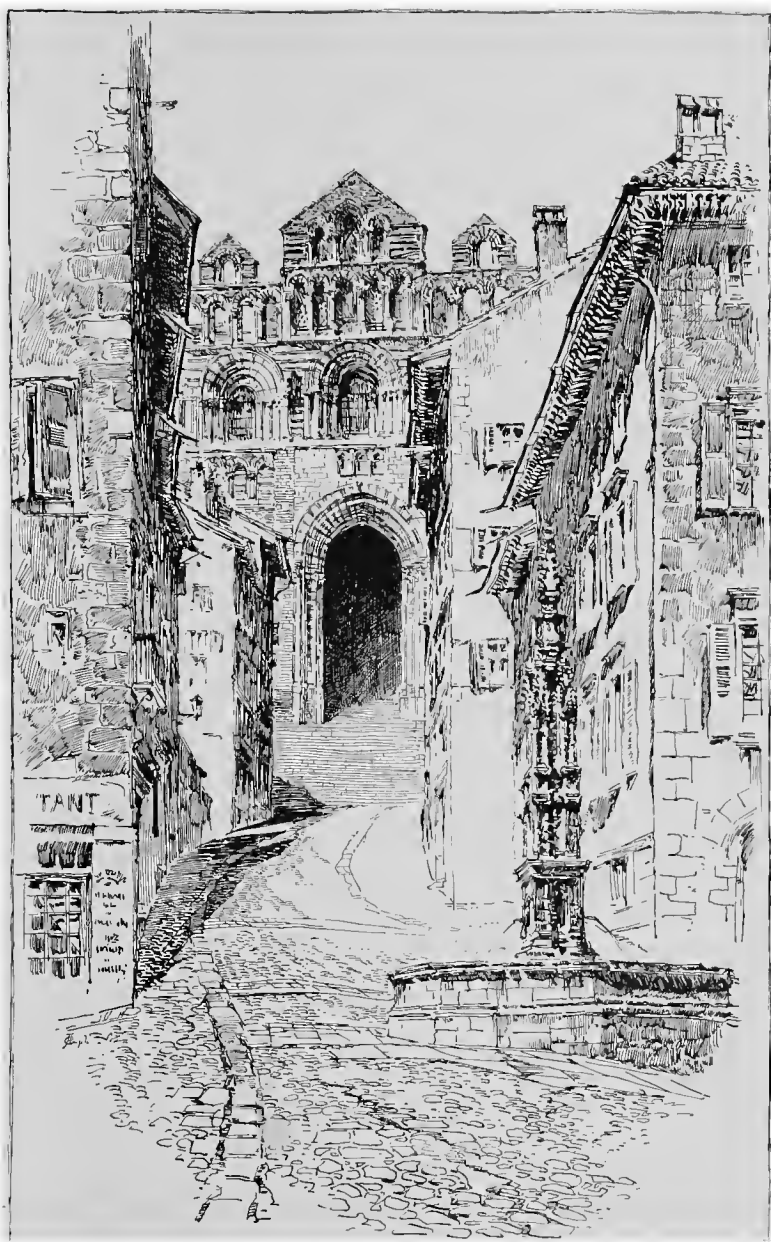
Whether best or not, it, was a curious rambling old place. The omnibus passed under a *porte cochère* that was half a tunnel, and finally issued on to a small courtyard. A short flight of steps led to the hotel proper, and at the top of the steps the stalwart landlord loomed upon us like another Goliath. The first appearance of the inn was not very much in its favour, and no second impression corrected it. The long passages had very little light in them, the old wooden staircase no carpet. It was a cold night, and the wind seemed to whistle through cracks and crevices, and played fantastic tricks with the candle flame as the man shuffled up-stairs in slip-shod slippers with the baggage. Madame was still in her bureau, where alone was warmth and comfort. But madame was preparing to disappear for the night. Vigil, she informed us, was bad for the complexion, though madame was past the age when French women as a rule possess it. The train had never been so late, thanks to the fêtes and the crowds. Our rooms were large, but bare, cold and comfortless. It was not altogether the fault of the rooms, but partly the effect of the midnight hour, and of our long, wretched journey, alighting finally in a freezing atmosphere under the night stars. We found a slight refuge and refreshment in the *salle à manger*, where a sleepy, solitary waiter by the light of a solitary gloomy lamp served us with warm tea that in spite of a strong flavour of chopped hay was refreshing. Our dreams that night were haunted by unruly

crowds rushing into Pandemoniums. Now we inhabited a sable world, and now were surrounded by a thousand fiery furnaces shooting out tongues of flame, which vainly tried to reach us and from which we as vainly tried to escape.

Next morning we woke to broad sunshine and blue skies. Darkness of night and freezing atmosphere were of the past, and taking heart of grace, we opened wide the windows. Fresh, delicious, incense-breathing air came in as a morning tonic; we gazed upon slanting red roofs, with ancient tiles and dormer windows; below was the courtyard, the omnibus still there, looking as if just awakening out of sleep. In this early light it all looked a quaint, picturesque, creeper-laden bower. We went down to our coffee, and found last night's sleepy waiter much brightened up by his late rest. He politely hoped we had had une bonne nuit and that ces messieurs would find much that was interesting in Le Puy.

This was soon put to the test, and we found in Le Puy much that is disappointing, much to repay a visit: falling below its reputation—all the songs in prose and verse that have been sung in its honour—yet possessing charms and attractions difficult to find elsewhere. The first impression is almost unpleasant. Near the hotels the streets are modern and commonplace, with only here and there a redeeming feature in the shape of an ancient building that has escaped the hands of the despoiler. At the first moment our spirits went down to zero. Had we left the Valley of the Rhône only for this?

In the upper town, reached by steep, narrow, tortuous streets by no means remarkable for cleanliness, lies the charm; and having climbed into the old town, you have your reward. Signs of antiquity surround you; ancient houses gabled and picturesque; whole groups of wonderful tenements whose latticed windows have let in the light of centuries. Some have fallen into decay; others are far on the road to it; and, alas, many are undergoing restoration. Nothing lasts for ever; and as very much of the picturesque age was of one period, so now we have reached a general stage of decay and restoration. All over Europe, go where you will, you meet a network of scaffolding, signs and tokens of demolition. It is heart-breaking, but no doubt inevitable. Future generations must find their outlines in books,



WEST FRONT OF CATHEDRAL.



and travel to the Nurembergs, Vitrés, Dantzies of the world in their arm-chairs.

We made for the cathedral, in its way a very singular and striking building. It is visible long before we reach it; as climbing the steep, narrow street that confronts the west entrance, we look up to what seems a dazzling height. The narrow street ends in a grand wide staircase or flight of steps, which is continued under the great vaulted porch. Things here are not now as they were. Once upon a time the staircase, now blocked by a dead wall, went straight on, crossed the pavement of the nave and ended at the transept immediately in front of the choir. The effect must have been magnificent and very unusual, full of religious impression. From the steps outside it has been said that the far-off officiating priest could be seen before the altar. Thousands of pilgrims came to the shrine of the Black Image.

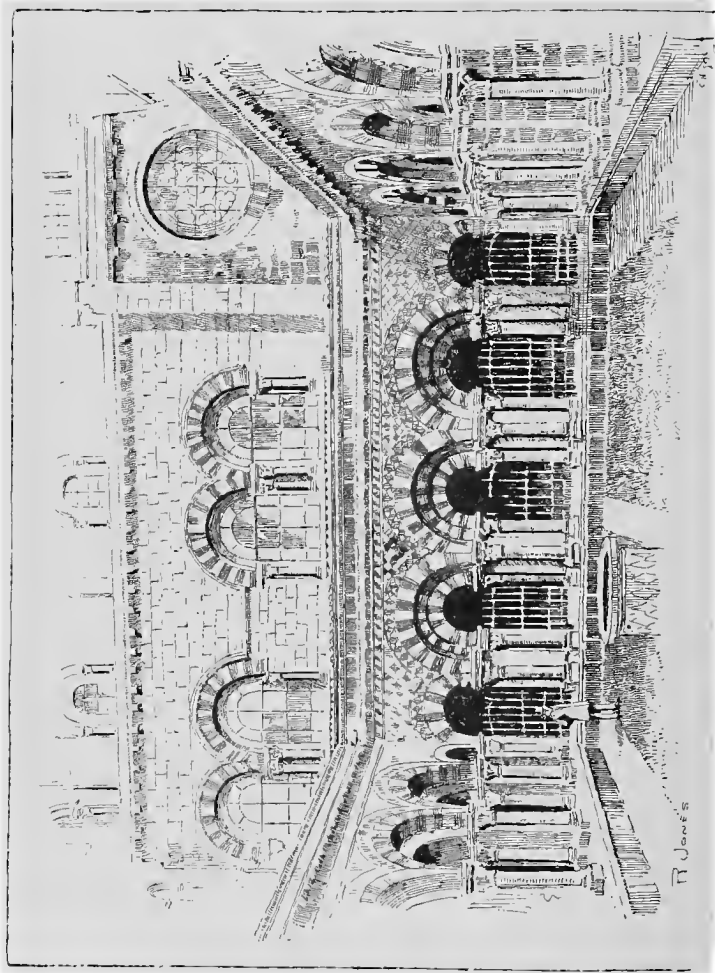
The church is a very fine specimen of Romanesque work. Its west front is peculiar: a mixture of black and white, red and yellow stones, arranged in patterns. But it has been scraped and renewed, and makes its certain chess-board effect hard, crude and stiff. It must once have been far finer than it is now, with its cold sharp outlines and pencillings. The great west portal is of the twelfth century, and the space beneath might itself form a small church. The vaulting under which we stand supports the flooring of the nave.

The doorway has two striking columns of red porphyry, the great portal three semicircular arches opening to the porch, and above it some smaller arcading. The effect of the west front is almost Byzantine.

The interior possesses a nave and aisles, and in the twelfth century the nave was covered with six Byzantine domes, which are still effective from the exterior. There is a lantern over the centre of the small transept, galleries, small double chapels and a square choir. The general effect is plain and massive.

Upon the high altar is a black image of the Virgin, supposed to work miracles. It is modern, and takes the place of one that was destroyed by the sacrilegious revolutionists: a very ancient black image, also working miracles, and supposed to have been carved by Jeremiah and brought to Europe at the

time of the Crusades. But we may be allowed to doubt whether Jeremiah ever devoted any time to carving black images. The cathedral has a very striking and beautiful south-



CATHEDRAL CLOISTERS.

east porch dating back to the twelfth century, elaborately ornamented with sculpture. The detached transitional clock-tower at the east end has seven diminishing stages with

Romanesque and pointed arches. This is also twelfth century. The exterior with its towers and domes, looked down upon from above, is remarkable.

The cloisters are very interesting, and some of the most ancient in France. These unfortunately have also been restored, and the process was still going on, so that they looked sadly fresh and new. They are oblong, with round arches supported by stone piers and granite columns, the capitals in white stone. Portions of this cloister date back to the eighth century. On the west side is a building with machicolations, the remains of a thirteenth-century fortress.

Continuing upwards from the cathedral, we ascended the Rocher de Corneille, a volcanic mass nearly 500 feet above the town, and 2500 above the level of the sea. Rude steps cut out of the rock form a Jacob's ladder to the summit, crowned by an enormous gilt image of Notre Dame de France 52 feet high, made out of 200 Russian cannons taken at Sebastopol.

The view from the Rocher is superb. We gaze over vast and undulating plains and innumerable vine-clad hills, whilst here and there a sharp volcanic peak denotes the origin of its existence. Immediately below us are the steep streets and red roofs of the town ; but there has been too much renovation, and the tone is disappointing.

Descending the long flight of steps, passing the cathedral, and getting back into the town, we found ourselves in a very picturesque nook. Before us was an octagonal building said to be a Temple of Diana, but more probably a Christian church built by the Templars. The roof rests on columns, and the alternate sections have Moresque arches : a gem, small, beautiful and ancient. Near it, in the open thoroughfare, was an old and splendid cross, which stood out with striking effect.

Going round amidst the old houses, where the old women came to their doors in wonderful old caps, reaching the lower town and passing out of it, we found ourselves before one of the most interesting objects of Le Puy : the huge needle rock crowned by the church of St. Michel d'Aiguille.

Nearly three hundred stairs cut out of the rock lead upwards. At the foot of these was an old woman making lace, guardian of the keys, her head adorned with a white cap, her pillow upon

her knees, where the bobbins flew about miraculously. Her small house of two rooms was close by.

"I have hard work to keep the pot-au-feu," she said, as we



TEMPLE OF DIANA.

watched the flying bobbins. "They don't give me much for keeping the keys of the church up there; so I have to fall back upon making lace. But it is a poor living; there is too much competition; we are a whole army of lace-making women, and

number 100,000. If monsieur has not visited the *Salle des dentelles*, he must do so, and there he will find every variety of the lace of the country."

So talking, she compelled us to buy some of her handiwork, and then confided to us the keys of the church.

"I will come with you if you like," she said; "but my old legs have got almost beyond that Jacob's ladder, and if you will lock the door and bring back the keys, you will be better without me. There is nothing to explain up there. It is not like a cathedral where the *suisse* goes round and delivers himself of a whole chapter of history, half of which is imagination."

We took the keys and dispensed with her escort. A formidable Jacob's ladder in truth as we looked up at the huge needle rock, with its three hundred rough steps; no wonder the old woman avoided them. Nevertheless it was a very interesting climb. The higher we went, the more the view expanded: the vast plain, the vine-clad hills, the town at our feet, with its red roofs and steep narrow streets, the *Rocher de Corneille*, which almost overshadowed us with its irritating colossal figure.

But what a reward at the end of our pilgrimage! Before us stood the wonderful little church, forming, as it were, part of the rock itself. This alone would repay a visit to Le Puy. The exterior, Romanesque with a Byzantine feeling and influence about it, was full of exquisite detail. A short flight of steps led to the old doorway with its quaint *bas-reliefs* flanked by two pillars with gracefully carved capitals. Above this rose a profusion of decoration: a series of small round arches enclosed in one broad arch, above which was an arcade of blind Romanesque arches; the whole crowned by a wonderful roof of red tiles. Perched up here, like Mahomet's coffin, between heaven and earth, it seemed miraculous.

Yet lovely though the exterior, the interior was the true marvel, resembling nothing we had ever seen, of most original design. There was so much system in its oval irregular plan that, small as it was—not larger than an ordinary room—there were at least five distinct and separate views, each making a charming and striking picture. We had no drawing materials

with us, but never doubted that we should obtain photographs of it in the town: yet no one has ever had the enterprise to take it.

All was perfect in detail and arrangement: an aisle with pillars and pointed arches that circled round, narrowing at the end. This enclosed the little nave, as it might be called, capable of holding a dozen chairs. A small altar table stood at the east end. It was a building to dream about and to haunt. We longed to linger here for days; that we might return to it again and again, and study its nameless charm: the charm of a thousand years—for it dates back to 962. The light entered through small windows, and there was an exquisite tone over all. We finally left it with infinite reluctance.

"I thought you were never coming down again," said the old woman, as we handed her the keys, "and began to wonder whether you had fallen over the rock and made the return journey rather too quickly. I suppose, monsieur, you admired the little church—or perhaps the view attracted you?"

"The little church has no rival," we replied. "Do not others say so?"

"I never hear it much praised, but we don't have so very many visitors," she said. "Half the English who come can't talk six words of French, and those who can never stop to say a word to me. They just throw me the keys and a ten-centime piece, and away they go. Now monsieur is *sympathique* and not above a few words with the old lace-maker. Our lives would be much pleasanter if it were always so."

We laughed at the implied compliment, and felt that the old woman was wise in her generation.

On our way back to the old town we entered the interesting fourteenth-century church of St. Laurent, and found the tomb and statue of the famous Du Guesclin, greatest French general of the fourteenth century: of whom it is recorded he was so dull a boy that he could never be taught to read or write. Yet his fame survives. We know how he was present at the Battle of Poitiers when King John was taken prisoner; was himself taken prisoner by Sir John Chandos at the Battle of Auray; was again defeated by the Black Prince when he had marched against Pedro the Cruel of Castile; finally himself defeated and



AN OLD NOOK : ST. MICHEL, D'AIGUILHE IN BACKGROUND.



slew Pedro, and was made Constable of Castile. Charles V. recalled him, made him Constable of France, and in the campaigns of 1370 against the English he was altogether



ST. MICHEL D'AIGUILHE.

successful. His tomb and statue threw a halo of historical romance over the old church, for Du Guesclin had been beloved and admired by friends and enemies alike.

We wandered about the steep old streets of the upper town.

Every step, every winding and turning disclosed some picturesque and ancient house or group of houses. From one large house at a corner, two sisters of mercy came out, with white caps that stretched half a yard beyond their faces. They are certainly picturesque, but must be very uncomfortable. The two sisters looked very effective as they crossed the street against the background of houses black with the smoke and "devastating dust" of centuries. As they came up to us we ventured to ask them to what order they belonged.

"St. Vincent de Paul," one of them replied; "and they went about nursing the sick, helping the poor; sometimes turning into the schools and giving a hand to the teachers. Wherever they could be useful there they went. Ces messieurs were strange to the place?"

Mere birds of passage, we declared; here to-day and gone to-morrow.

"Very much like our own lives," said the sister, who spoke in rather a sweet and gentle voice. "To-day we flourish like the green grass; to-morrow we are cut down, dried up and withered. Not that we wish to be depressing," she laughed—a gentle laugh, it is true, but still a laugh. "We hope, monsieur, you have found Le Puy interesting?"

"Both interesting and disappointing. It seems essentially the place for spring and summer, not for late autumn. We must return when the leaves are green."

"And the birds in song," she added, "and there is golden sunshine over all."

We walked up the street together, and the sisters paused before an old doorway. "If you are fond of ancient outlines, come in here," said one. "You will be pleased."

She turned a handle, and passing down a passage led us to an old fifteenth century Gothic courtyard, not very large, but exquisitely beautiful: a gem of the world. A small cloistered passage ran round it, the arches supported by slender pillars with capitals of delicately carved foliage. From these sprang the groins of the vaulted roof. Nothing had been touched or restored; effect and tone were perfect. Above the cloister ran a blind Gothic arcade, and above this, here and there in the dark grey wall, was an old window with deep Gothic mullions.



SIDE ENTRANCE TO CATHEDRAL.



As a set off against this charm of a dead-and-gone world, in the centre of the courtyard there flourished a group of trees and flowers more green and brilliant than we could have imagined in dilapidated old Le Puy, with its terrible streets and unsavoury odours. Above all, the blue sky and autumn sunshine.

"I knew you would be pleased," said the nun, noting our speechless admiration. "This now belongs to a private house, but was once part of an old convent, and by some happy chance has escaped demolition."

"It is the gem of the whole province," we cried. "And but for you we should not have seen it."

"Nobody ever sees it," returned the sister. "It is difficult to find, and there is nothing to indicate its existence. Strangers come and go, pass the door ten times, and never dream of what they are losing. Had you not spoken to us, you also would never have seen it, as you observe. Not one person in five hundred ever addresses a word to us. I think our caps frighten them, just as scarecrows frighten the birds."

"Or perhaps they think you vowed to silence and it would be useless to make a remark?"

"Oh, for that matter, we are women," laughed the sister; "and amongst ourselves talk and chatter, and try to make this weary world as pleasant to one another as we can."

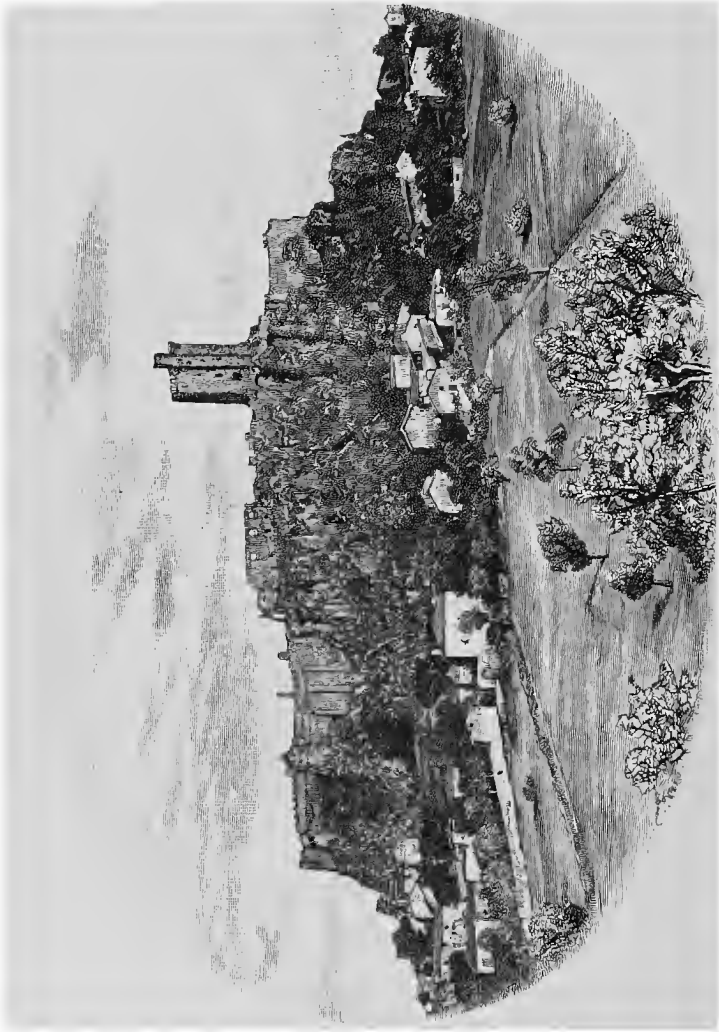
We parted from the sisters owing them a debt of gratitude. They passed into the house through a Gothic doorway at the end of the little cloister and disappeared.

Then we made for the hotel, and after luncheon, following madame's advice, took a drive to the ruined castle of Polignac, which lies three miles north-west of the town.

As we have said, it was late in the year for Le Puy. Autumn in this district was too far advanced; the cold winds swept across the great plains and over the hills; vegetation languished and died. Yet the drive was very lovely. The road was often rugged and uneven; now we toiled upwards round a volcanic hill, now descended into the valley with its rivers, and pastures in which the cows browsed leisurely.

The ruined Château of Polignac, perched on its gigantic rock, is a conspicuous object in the vast plain. Our conveyance

toiled up through the village as far as the old Romanesque church, which goes back to the eleventh century, from which



CHÂTEAU DE POLIGNAC.

point we had to wind round the rock on foot to the entrance of the castle. Walls of immense thickness still surround it; some

of them double and treble walls, here and there flanked by a tower, the square donjon conspicuous above all.

A portion of the building goes back to the eleventh century, and the whole might still be standing but for the destructive days of the Revolution. The castle was torn down, the lands were sold, and the de Polignacs found themselves shorn of their stronghold. But the day came when they were able to repurchase the ruin, though they could never again inhabit their despoiled inheritance.

It was very interesting. The wonderful view over the surrounding plains followed us everywhere. The woman who escorted us and opened the keep had her lesson by heart.

"The de Polignacs were a great family," she declared, "and are so still, though they cannot any longer live in this old castle. I ought to know all about them if anyone does, for we have been servants of the family and custodians for three hundred years: quite an ancient pedigree," drawing herself up. "It has descended from father to son in an unbroken line."

She had a well-developed, intelligent head, this woman, and brown eyes clear as the heavens, and was evidently no common character. But she was a little lame and deformed, which gave her the somewhat pathetic expression of countenance so often seen in deformed people: as though they felt that life was a continual cross and they had to take up their daily burden.

Her brother was custodian now, she informed us, pointing out his house inside the walls. Since he had married there was no room for her, so they had built her a little house all to herself; "the tiniest house of one room ever seen." She took us into it: a small room with everything white; a beautiful white bed in the corner; all the pink of perfection: on the table a lace-pillow.

"Then you, too, make lace?" we observed.

"It is my living," she replied, displaying some very fine specimens. "Monsieur cannot do better than buy some for his ladies in England."

On the floor was a rude wooden cradle, and in it, tightly packed, a lovely child with blue eyes large as saucers. He had

the same well-developed, intelligent head, and much resembled her, excepting that her eyes were brown. As she looked at him, he laughed with that radiant almost angelic smile which sometimes illumines the faces of children.

"You are married?" asked H. C.

"Oh, no," she returned, blushing vividly. "This is my brother's child. But he stays here all day long with me whilst his mother is busy at her household work. If I never take him up, he never cries. He is as good as gold."

At this moment the mother appeared on the scene; a bright, comely woman, with large blue eyes the very counterpart of her baby's. She was charmed at the notice given to the infant, and when we complimented her upon the likeness between the two and the beauty of the blue orbs, she ran back to her house and her work with a blush and a gratified smile.

"Come and see the mask before you leave," said our guide. "The child will be all right; he will not cry or move; and there are no wolves here to come in and steal him away, Heaven be praised."

Then she led the way, and presently showed us an enormous mask carved in granite, the mask of a bearded face.

"It is said that on this spot was once a Temple of Apollo, and that this mask was the mouthpiece of the oracle. Here," she added, moving on a few steps, "is the Puits de l'Oracle. The oracles were delivered through it. It is very deep, and there are all sorts of traditions connected with it. One was that the year it ran dry, the castle would be destroyed. For the first time it ran dry in the year of the Revolution! But tradition is often prophecy—I believe it to be inspired."

The shadows were lengthening when we left the heights of Polignac to the safe custody of our interesting guide, who did not fail to accompany us to the great gates and speed us on our way with a hearty "Bon voyage, messieurs. Revenez avec les beaux jours. En hiver il fait un froid de loup."

We passed round the rock and found our driver, who was evidently not a man of divided affections. Near the church was a cabaret, and the latter had received all his devotion, the church none of it. He settled his score, mounted his box, and in a few moments we were winding down through the anti-

quated, poverty-stricken village of Polignac, until a turn brought us to the high-road, vineyards and green pastures. In the distance, perched on the top of the Rocher de Corneille, outlined against the clear cold sky, the colossal image of Notre Dame de France stretched forth her golden arms towards us in perpetual benediction.

## CHAPTER VI.

Sunset vision—Out in the night—The Sisters again—"I, too, was an artist"—The next morning—Rainy weather—A chilly departure—The diligence—High latitudes—A snowstorm—Travelling glazier—Our driver—Amiable giant—Picturesque maiden—Coffee and hot rolls—Female ostler—Pradelles—The *Trois Pigeons*—Langogne—Summer again—Conversational lady—"When we were young"—The Camisards—Historical neighbourhood—Roland Laporte—Nîmes—Hôtel du Luxembourg—Plague of flies—Two aspects—Defective social element—Roman treasures—Greek influence—The Ancient Nemausus—Fascination—Guizot—Amphitheatre—Maison Carrée—Roman baths—Temple of Diana—The Tour Magne—Wonderful view—Convent of Recollets—Pont du Gard—Famous aqueduct—Banks of the river—A Garden of Eden—Adam—The old château—A day-dream.

WE left the Château de Polignac towering above the plain, a gigantic ruined castle of the days gone by, to which the little lacemaker lent it a certain human and pathetic interest. She was out of the ordinary run of mankind; was able to boast of a long unbroken line of ancestors; and though they had not blue blood in their veins, yet even a humble pedigree has its moral and material influence. Undoubtedly she was the most interesting person we met in and around Le Puy, not excepting the amiable Sisters of Charity, who had shown us paradise in the form of the small, secluded, unknown court, that we now think of as one of the gems of the world. It matches the wonderful little church of St. Michel d'Aiguilhe, that, perched on its dizzy height, seems itself half way to paradise.

The Château de Polignac was behind us on our quiet drive back to the old town, before us the irritating statue above the Rocher de Corneille, sharply outlined against the sky. Crossing the bridge over the Borne, under the shadow of the very first houses we dismissed our rumbling old vehicle—for which a

fabulous price was charged in the bill—made our way up the tortuous old streets, and once more stood before the cathedral, with its curious Byzantine influence. The setting sun poured its glow upon the west front, and the deep recesses of the porch, where darkness had lately reigned, were full of glorious light and tone. The old woman selling photographs at her stall looked quite beautiful as her face caught the warm reflection.

At the top of the steps, looking westward, we saw a celestial vision. The sun was just sinking below the horizon, and the sky was full of gorgeous colouring, shading from deep crimson to pale amber; for a moment gilding and beautifying the whole town by its influence. Crowning the Rocher the brazen statue sent forth flames of fire, and flames lighted up the windows of many an old house and seemed to bring back life from the dead.

In that moment Le Puy possessed a charm hitherto wanting, and it faded with sunset.

We wandered amidst the ancient outlines until darkness fell and it was time to go back to the hotel and to dinner. As we have already said, it was not a comfortable *pied à terre*, and there was very little civilisation about it. The wind rushed up and down the bare staircase, which was always in semi-darkness. A large rambling old place, this *Hôtel des Diplomates*, very far removed from the atmosphere suggested by its name.

Later on we went out into the night. The town looked weird and mysterious; so dark that no outlines could be seen, for something had gone wrong with the street illumination. Lights gleamed on the heights like solitary stars. We mounted the narrow streets, where here and there a lamp or candle lighted up an ancient casement, and ancient outlines and gables stood out faintly against the night sky, in which the pale stars flashed. Everything suggested quietness and repose. Not a sound disturbed the dead silence, nor was a creature visible. The west front of the cathedral looked dreamy and unreal; its great portal, so flushed with glory at sunset, now dark and impenetrable. The whole place seemed surrounded by ghosts and shadows of the past.

From a hospital near at hand, the two sisters we had seen in the afternoon flitted out into this ghostly atmosphere, them-

selves as silent as the departed. Their white caps, their walk, betrayed them, and we stood motionless. As they passed they started, looking keenly at us.

"We meet again," said one, recovering from her surprise. "It is rare to find anyone here at this hour, sirs. You are contemplating Le Puy under a night-effect—the sunset this evening was more glorious. But I know that night has its charm, especially to the artistic temperament. Outlines are softened; everything appeals strongly to the imagination. I began life myself as an artist, and know something of what you think and feel. We have just left the hospital, where there are one or two serious cases. Before morning one of them will assuredly have crossed the dark river. We are now on our way home. Our duties are over for the day; but at any hour of the day or night we hold ourselves in readiness to serve. We also stand and wait."

They flitted silently into the darkness, ministering spirits; leaving us on the cathedral steps looking down into the narrow street in front, broken into patches of light by the illuminated windows.

We made our own way back to the inn, no easy matter in the winding thoroughfares. The little courtyard was in depressing gloom, within doors all was cold and cheerless, and up the gloomy staircase we made the best of our way to our rooms. After all, it had been a day of brilliant sunshine and rare experiences. That we were disappointed with Le Puy as a whole was not to be denied, but it has many charms, and undoubtedly stands out as exceptional and remarkable amongst the towns of Auvergne.

We were to leave the next morning by an early diligence, taking the road across country to Langogne. The drive was said to be superb, and was on the way to Nîmes.

Devoutly we hoped for a fine day, and terrible the disappointment on awaking to rain and lowering clouds. At five o'clock a servant entered our room, lighted the candles, and, like *il sereno* in sunny Catalonia, announced the weather.

"Monsieur, il fait froid—il tombe de l'eau."

This was rousing, and accordingly in one moment we were wide awake.

"Then run quickly to the diligence-office and see whether we can have the coupé. If not, we remain here." For we had taken seats beside the driver.

"Monsieur, the coupé is libre," was the report of the garçon. "I have secured it."

Everything was still in profound darkness when we went down the cold, carpetless staircase. They had not even prepared café-au-lait, and we turned out into the wet and the gloom in a very uncomfortable and very unsatisfied state of mind.

Fortunately the diligence started from a café, and here the enterprising people provided coffee and rolls, gratefully received. It was a wretched morning, and the crazy old coupé was draughty, but with the first glimmer of dawn it almost seemed that the rain inclined to abate. We took heart of grace, and hoped for sunshine and warmth after sunrise.

The diligence was finally packed, and in the twilight we started off with three horses abreast. Through the still sleeping town we rattled and woke the echoes.

Once outside the boundaries there was a great deal of climbing and struggling, and we made way slowly. With full daylight a change came over the weather, but not the change we had hoped for. It began to snow, and was soon coming down in enormous flakes more thickly than we had ever yet seen it. In a very short time the whole landscape was lying under a white shroud. We were climbing to high latitudes; the wind whistled and howled, the cold was piercing. Yesterday we had been in midsummer, to-day it was arctic midwinter. Before we had gone many miles the horses were slipping over the road, the diligence made deep ruts in the snow.

This sudden change was bewildering. The few people we met on the road looked perished. Some took refuge under umbrellas, of which the strong wind disputed possession; others hurried along, their bodies wrapped in long cloaks, their faces hidden in capuchons. Inside the coupé we were comparatively sheltered, but our feet turned to blocks of ice, and we almost froze in our seats.

We had gradually ascended until we were high above the world. Vast white plains surrounded us, bounded by distant white hills. We overtook a travelling glazier, carrying his

frame upon his back, who begged a lift of the driver. The latter replied he was welcome to it if he attached himself to the rumble like a bale of merchandise, and the glacier proved equal to the occasion.

This driver of ours was an enormous man, standing some six feet six in his stockings, broad and massive in proportion. He had the legs and feet of a giant, and his boots must have weighed a ton. But he was cheerfulness and good-nature personified, as these giants often are ; looking carefully after his horses, and occasionally coming up to see if we were still alive. The earth seemed to shake under his heavy tread, and the air vibrated with his cheery voice and hearty laugh.

When we were at our coldest and most petrified stage, the diligence reached a large village and stopped at a quaint old inn. The driver came up to know if we would descend ; but the snow was now a foot deep, and we felt we should only be adding fuel to the fire of our misery. We decided to stay where we were, and begged him to send us some hot coffee.

In a few minutes out came a picturesque maiden with two steaming bowls, each holding a liberal pint, and a couple of hot rolls. How this restored circulation, and how the blood went tingling through the veins, it would be hard to tell. Whilst we took it the maid waited, apparently rather enjoying the snow than otherwise. When paying her modest demands we gave her an extra ten sous for her trouble and good-natured waiting. This seemed to represent a small fortune to her, for her face beamed with delight, and she went round to the people standing about showing her prize. We regretted that we had not doubled the amount, until H. C. suggested that this would probably have overturned her reason.

At one place where we changed horses a woman was the chief ostler, and when, on starting off, one of the animals was stubborn and disinclined to do the right thing, she ran beside it like a lamplighter, urging it on with the strength and vigour of a giant and forcing it to obey.

Pradelles was our last halting-place : a small, uninteresting town, said to be dirty as a rule, but robed this morning in pure white raiment. It was high up and correspondingly cold, and we did not care how short a halt we made at the



IN THE STORM.



Hôtel des Trois Pigeons, whose outward aspect certainly was not inviting. Here everyone left the diligence but ourselves, and we thought the world was going to pieces as they moved from the roof and threw down with a noise of thunder sundry heavy boxes belonging to commis-voyageurs, habitués apparently of the Trois Pigeons from their manner of taking possession.

After this there came a long steep descent into Langogne, until we found ourselves in the valley and out of all trace of snow. The experience we had gone through seemed as a dream. We had made a journey through wonderland, so sudden had been the transition to the white world, so startling and complete its disappearance. In spite of the freezing cold, we had very much enjoyed the Siberian adventure.

At the station of Langogne fortunately there was a capital buffet, to which H. C. did such justice that had the shade of Lady Maria been present it would have fled with affright to more ethereal regions, never to return. But as Lady Maria had not yet joined the Land of Shadows, it was certain that her ghost could not be taking unseen record of H. C.'s proceedings.

At the right season of the year, the last thing to be done is to take the train at Langogne for Nîmes. The old carriage road passes through one of the loveliest drives in this part of the world, winding about the mountain chain of La Lozère, where some of the finest Alpine scenery is to be found. There is the gradual ascent of the Pass, and then the descent amidst precipices, rushing mountain torrents and ruined castles; extreme wildness combined with much beauty of vegetation. But the time for this was past; we had had one long snowy experience and were in no mood for a second. The lady presiding at the buffet, it is true, enlarged upon the beauties of this drive, describing it in glowing colours; rather to her disadvantage, we thought, since it was to the buffet's interest that the railway should be patronised rather than the road.

"Many a time," said madame, "when I was a few years younger than I am now, have I made it my summer holiday, going on foot right down to Nîmes, and feeling in paradise. No

wonder. They were my early married days, and my husband was with me, as handsome a man as you would see in these parts. I had no dot; he married me, not for les beaux yeux de la cassette, but for genuine love. Ten short years, hélas, and he died. But I can never forget the delight of our summer excursions. We only took a few miles every day; knew every one on the road, and could always find a friend to put us up for the night. Ah, the beauty of those walks! If you could only see the marronniers in full bloom springing out of the rocky precipices and overshadowing the mountain torrent in its deep bed! It is a sight never to be forgotten. At Nîmes we were at home. Both my people and my husband's people lived there. We would spend a few days with one and a few days with another, and then make our way back to Pradelles, where my husband had established himself in a business. If he had lived we should have made our little fortune; but when he died I did not care what became of me. For a whole year I was steeped in melancholy; hardly ate, seldom spoke. *Que voulez-vous?* Time heals all wounds. Only in one thing have I been firm; I would never marry again. Ah! there is the signal for the train."

We bade madame le bonjour, assuring her that her descriptions had fired us with enthusiasm, and we should return some summer day to follow in her footsteps over the Pass of la Lozère. Up came the train, and our last look at the platform showed madame and the station-master side by side, in animated conversation.

The snow had disappeared, but rain still fell in a determined and depressing manner. We passed several quaint old towns, and here and there found ourselves in the region of coal mines. At Alais were many signs of a busy manufacturing place, the mines yielding both coal and iron. The surrounding neighbourhood has many iron furnaces, whilst silk-mills and glass-works abound.

It was near here, at the famous Tour de Bellot, that the Camisard tragedy took place, when a band of 1500 Camisards were betrayed into the hands of the troops of Louis XIV. The culprit was a miller, who had professed to befriend them and supplied them with provisions: then turned upon them. The

betrayal took place at night in 1704. Most of them were cut to pieces, but the leader and a part of the band escaped. In the tower the little garrison behaved nobly. The chief had in vain tried to come to their rescue, but they blocked up the entrances, and made a brave resistance, shooting down the enemy time after time. Then the tower was set on fire by the enemy and 300 of them perished. The king's troops lost 1200. Vengeance overtook the miller who had betrayed the Camisards. They took him, condemned him to death, and when he was led out to execution, it is said that his two sons looked on, after refusing to bid him farewell.

The whole neighbourhood is historical and romantic, for it was the scene and centre of the Cevenol War two centuries ago. Vézénobres especially suffered and its people were massacred by Lalande. The town had been provisioned by the Camisards, who had concealed themselves in the neighbourhood. Lalande had no mercy on them. It was at the castle of Castelnau near Ners that Roland Laporte, chief of the Cevenols, was killed. This again was due to betrayal. The raid took place in the middle of the night, and when the alarm was given, the Camisards had barely time to rush to the stables, and, half-dressed as they were, mount their horses and gallop away without saddles or bridles. They were overtaken, and Roland died bravely defending his life. The Camisards at once lost heart and surrendered; the body of Roland Laporte was burnt at Nîmes, and his ashes were scattered to the winds.

To this Nîmes the train was now taking us. All beauty of scenery was lost in lowering clouds and rain; but the rivers, valleys and surrounding mountains needed only sunshine and blue skies to light up their glory. By the time we reached our journey's end the clouds were lifting and hurrying away with a promise of fair weather. The shades of evening were gathering. As the station was all bustle and excitement, and the hotel porter said it would be some time before they could obtain the luggage, we walked down the tree-lined avenue to the Hôtel du Luxembourg; happily a great advance on the Diplomates at Le Puy. Things were better ordered and organised, and madame sat in her bureau with much dignity, and saw to the ways of her household. In the dining-room,

however, there was a terrible plague of flies, which very much disturbed one's repose of mind. The place was black with them; and we had never seen anything like it, excepting once at one of the restaurants at Pompeii. Yet no one troubled about it; either the people were used to it and indifferent, or the plague was beyond remedy.

At a first glance we thought Nîmes also disappointing. That part of the town given up to shops and commerce is commonplace and uninteresting, and this is the part first seen on arriving. Here the hotels are situated and here is the chief life and movement of the place.

Only the next morning did we discover its rare charm. The weather of yesterday had evidently been sent in order that we might fully appreciate the blue skies and sunshine of to-day. We revelled in midsummer warmth, and yesterday's snow-journey seemed more than ever a dream.

The outskirts and boulevards of Nîmes form its interest, and redeem that commonplace element of which the hotel is the flourishing centre. But the great attraction and wonder are the Roman remains, as perfect as they are beautiful. Yet it is quite true that the modern element in Nîmes is in direct contradiction to the ancient: a social element wanting in taste, art, and refinement. This feeling is most subtly conveyed; an intangible commonplace atmosphere more felt than seen surrounds the town, a something out of harmony with the splendid Roman treasures which make Nîmes one of the most interesting places in the world: interesting beyond measure to visit, but probably deadly dull to live in. Society is commercial and manufacturing rather than artistic, scientific or literary. But it flourishes and is rich and progressive. Ancient *Nemausus* lives only in a few matchless relics of the past. The Greek influence quickly yielded to the Roman, and in the year 121 B.C. it was already a strong Roman colony. Augustus enlarged it, Agrippa, Trajan and Antonius added to its wealth and beauty. To their efforts Nîmes owes most of its present charm.

In those days it must have been a wonder of the world: a little Rome: possessing its capitol, its temples, a wonderful aqueduct, a forum, and a Campus Martius. In 407 it was injured by the Visigoths, next fell into the hands of the Sara-

cens, and passed on to the Counts of Toulouse. It became a Protestant city and suffered much during those Wars of Religion which for long disturbed the peace and prosperity of this little corner of the world. This ended in 1704, with the Camisard insurrection, when Roland Laporte fell and his body was burnt in the great square. The abuses following the Revocation of



AMPHITHEATRE.

the Edict of Nantes in 1685 had given rise to the insurrection, but no good came of it. Nîmes had some of the strong, hot blood of the south in its veins, and took a more eager part in the troubles of 1815 than even Marseilles or Avignon. For many months the town fell under the influence of banditti, who persecuted the Protestants and injured the place. From all this it has recovered; has sunk into a commonplace atmosphere

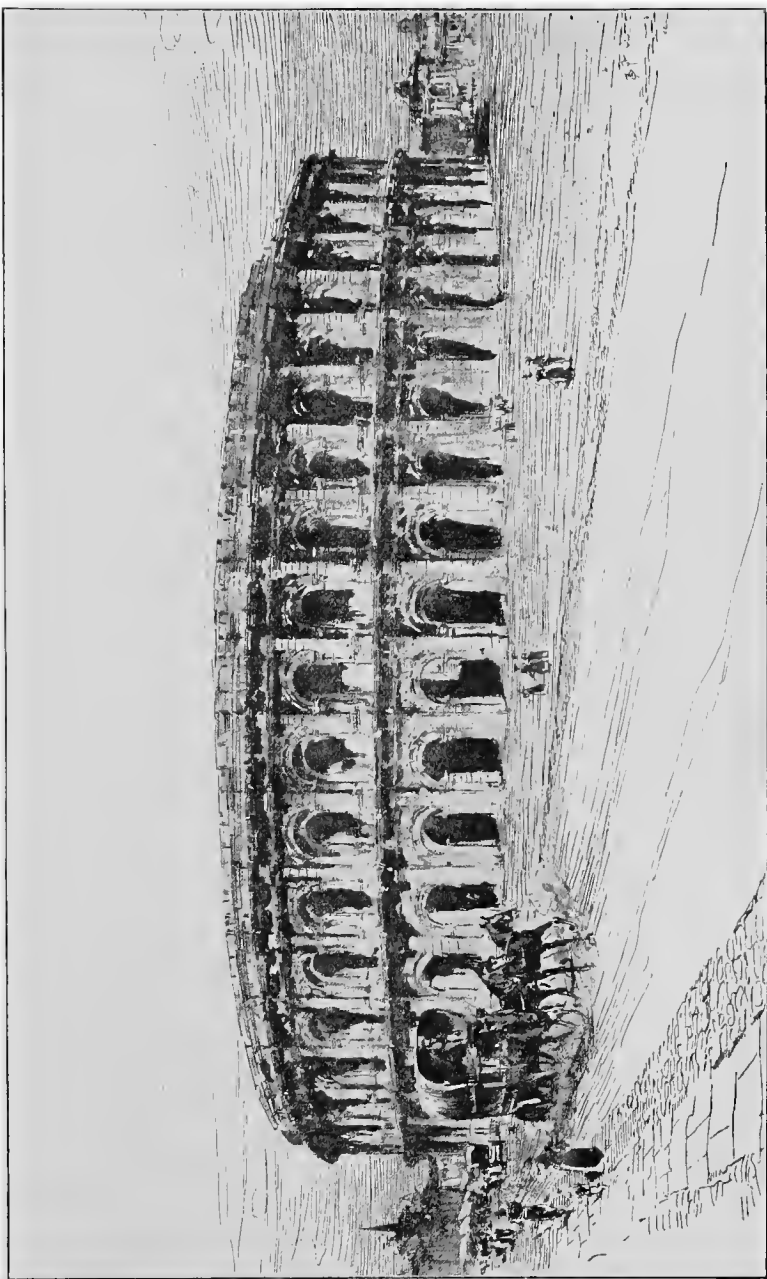
of industry and commerce, but flourishes, is happy, and daily growing in quiet wealth.

And it possesses its inestimable relics of the past. To those who know, the very word Nîmes conjures up visions of delight and refinement of which there are few equals. In short it is two distinct places : and the visitor, turning his back upon the ordinary element, may give himself up to the charms of the past, and in spirit go back to the days and scenes of Augustus and Trajan. Only those who have fallen under this influence can realise its fascination ; the world of romance and stirring deeds and great achievements it represents.

Amongst more recent men Nîmes was the birthplace of Nicot, who was French Ambassador to Portugal in 1590, and introduced tobacco into France ; and of Guizot ; that man who had so much to do with political France before the Second Empire ; whose prospects were destroyed for ever by the Coup d'état ; who was so little understood ; and who was so honest that he died a poor man when he might easily have died a rich one.

On that brilliant morning following our arrival we went forth, little dreaming how much was in store for us.

In the centre of the great square rises the Amphitheatre, one of the most perfect Roman buildings in existence : a gigantic splendid monument of the past, standing out in strong contrast with the blue of the sky. In form it is oval, its dimensions 437 feet by 332 feet. There are two storeys of sixty arcades seventy feet high, the uppermost ornamented with Doric columns. The stones are enormous, and without cement. In the interior are many of the original seats : thirty-two rows of seats, once capable of accommodating 24,000 spectators. The exact date and founder of the amphitheatre are not known, but it has been variously attributed to Titus, Adrian, and Antoninus Pius. In the days of the Visigoths and the Saracens it was turned into a fortress. The latter was expelled by Charles Martel in the eighth century, and he did his best to destroy it by filling all the vaults and passages with wood and setting fire to it, but fortunately its solid masonry resisted the flames. Yet the fire that would not destroy the building, cracked some of its walls : and these cracks still bear witness



AMPHITHEATRE, NÎMES.



to those destructive efforts. It is one of the most perfect arenas in the world, and a closer inspection of the wonderful masonry, the long corridors, the gigantic vaults, the passages that all radiate from the centre, widening outwards, only adds to the admiration one feels for the Romans in the days when they were masters of the world.

Not very far off, through one of the boulevards, we came



MAISON CARRÉE.

upon a very different monument, the Maison Carrée, one of the loveliest of Corinthian temples. Few Roman monuments are as perfect; and in this temple, we have a trace of Grecian influence, due no doubt to the Greek colonists who were already here when Rome took possession. Hence much of its peculiarly refined beauty, which delights the beholder no less than its remarkable state of preservation.

Consecrated as a temple in the reign of Augustus or

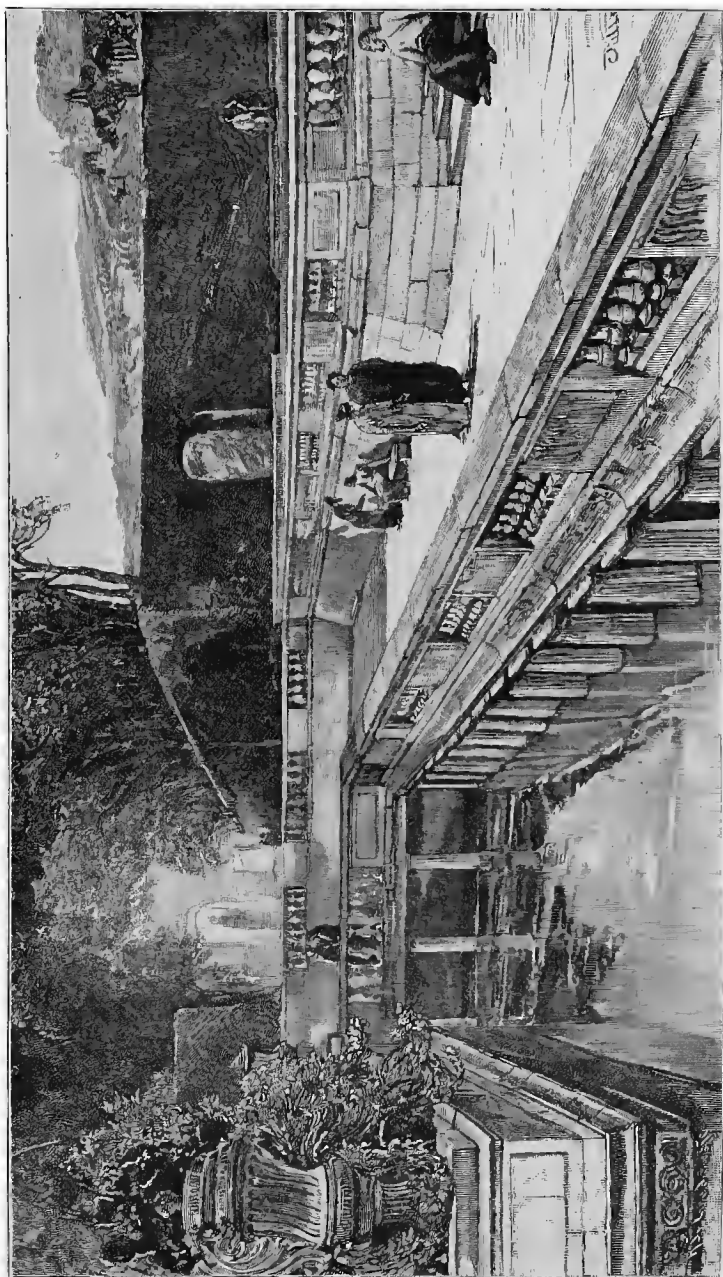
Antoninus Pius, it afterwards became a Christian church. In time it was desecrated and degraded to a stable, a corn warehouse, and finally a museum. It has an exquisite frieze, and is surrounded by thirty Corinthian columns: ten detached



JARDIN PUBLIC.

and forming the portico, and twenty attached to the walls of the cella.

According to an inscription, restored by M. Séquier, the temple was dedicated to "Marcus and Julius Cæsar, grandsons



ROMAN BATH.



of Augustus, consuls-elect, princes of youth," but the interpretation is doubtful.

This temple was only the centre of a much larger edifice, supposed to have occupied one end of the Forum of *Nemausus* in the days of its greatness. Fifteen steps lead up to the portico. The columns are fluted, whilst the capitals are most beautifully carved. Its form is a parallelogram 76 feet long, 40 feet wide, and 40 feet high.

In the square of the arena, a diligence heavily laden, with three strong horses, was just starting on its journey to Arles, where it still runs in spite of the train. The driver had the reins well in hand, and the horses were eager for a gallop, when he caught sight of our Kodak. At once he politely drew up, placed himself in position, waited to be taken, made a bow, and continued his journey. Whether they receive an "impression" or not, these people delight to be photographed. In Brittany in some of the remote coast settlements, it was very much the opposite. They are terribly superstitious, those Breton folk, who are a century behind the rest of the world: and on the first approach of a camera scatter to the winds as though the machine were charged with death. A century behind the world; but this is fast disappearing even in Brittany. Railways are everywhere bringing mankind to a dead level of commonplace aspect and equality.

The most striking coup d'œil in Nîmes was undoubtedly the Public Garden. Here again we were under the influence of Roman times, blended with much that was beautiful and graceful of the present.

Standing in the centre, we look down upon the ancient Roman bath, surrounded by a square colonnade, sunk below the level of the soil. Beyond it a magnificent winding stone staircase, decorated with admirable statues, leads to zigzag paths up the high limestone hill. This is planted with trees whose graceful branches droop and spread on all sides, overshadowing the white stairway.

At the summit of the hill, through the trees, we catch sight of a half-ruined tower said to date back to a time when the Romans as yet knew not Nîmes. To the left, not far from where we stand is the gem of the garden: the ruined Temple

of Diana according to some: a fane dedicated to the nymphs and connected with the Roman Bath according to others. This temple also stands surrounded by trees, whose leaves in the sunshine, stirred by the breeze, glint and gleam upon the ruins.

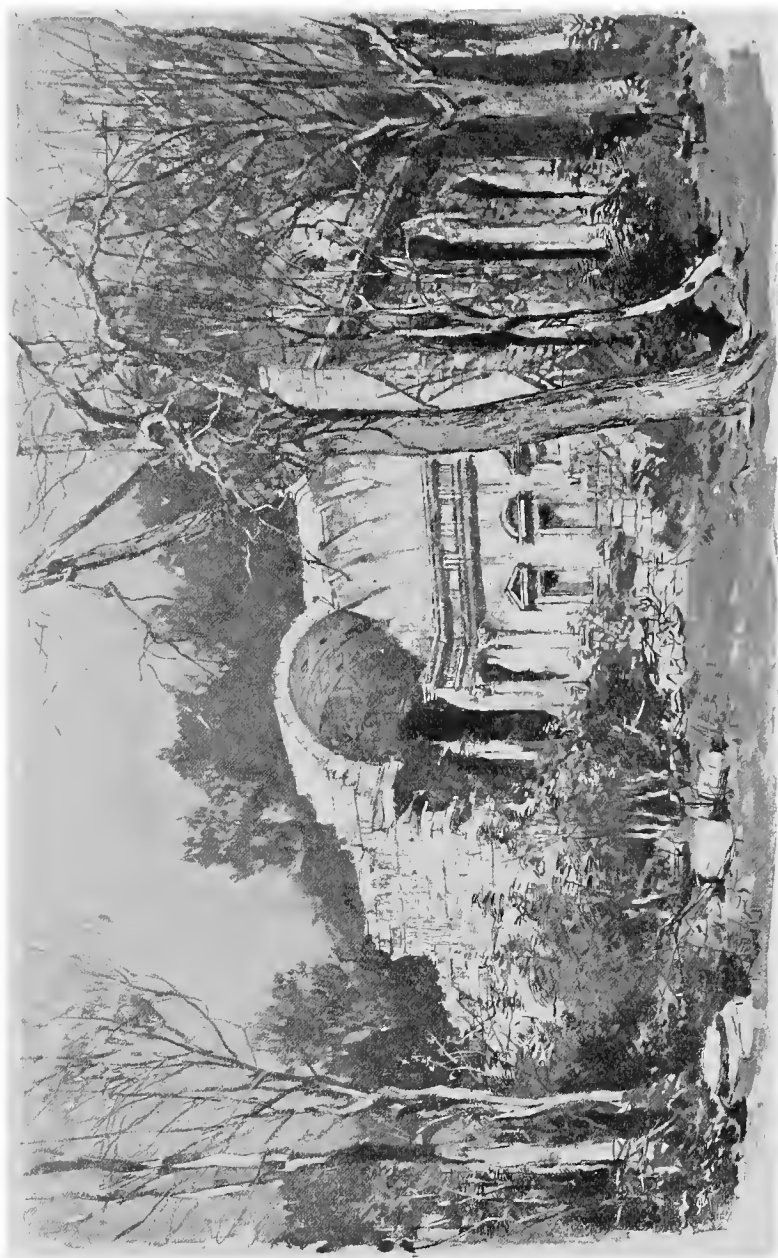
This fragment is one of the most perfect things in existence, especially as we saw it that day in strong light and shadow. Like the Bath, it dates back to the days of Augustus. Three splendid arches rise on the façade, and the interior indicates a large hall and passages, with niches for statues. Here were traces of a staircase, there of an altar. The architectural details were endless, curves and outlines of singular beauty, with a good deal of Grecian influence about them.

The broad staircase and zigzags of the Mont Cavalier led up to the Tour Magne. The hill is 375 feet high, the tower, octagonal and partly in ruin, is 90 feet high, and is said to have been originally a mausoleum.

The view was magnificent. At our feet lay the whole city of Nîmes: the Arena, the Maison Carrée, the gems of the Public Garden all visible at a glance. Out in the country, at Pont du Gard, the wonderful Roman aqueduct spanned the valley of the Gardon. On the other side was a wide stretch of country, in which the walls and towers of Aigues-Mortes were conspicuous; and beyond them, faintly outlined on the horizon, the blue waters of the Mediterranean: a scene, with few rivals either in this or any other neighbourhood.

The theatre, standing immediately opposite the Maison Carrée, was a strange satire upon the commonplace architecture of the present as compared with the past.

But its site is both historical and romantic. Here once stood the Convent of Recollets, surrounded by magnificent gardens, scene of the interview in 1704 between Marshal Villars and Cavalier, chief of the Camisards. Cavalier, originally a baker's boy, had raised himself by his talents, eloquence and powers of organisation to be the leading spirit of the Cévennes Rebellion. On the occasion of this conference he appeared with a certain amount of state and ceremony; splendidly mounted, dressed in laced coat and cocked hat, and escorted by a body-guard. But he was treacherous to his cause. Villars by promises of rank and



TEMPLE OF DIANA.



other bribes, won him over to the side of Louis XIV. At the same time Villars undertook that the Protestants should have justice done to them; persecution should cease and in quietness and confidence they should be left to follow their religion.

This base act on the part of Cavalier was fatal to the rebellion: whilst the promises made to him, as is generally the case in such instances, were never fulfilled. Cavalier became an exile and ended his days as Governor of Jersey.

One year after that celebrated conference, hard by on the Place de la Bouquerie, they erected the gibbet, wheel, and stake, on which the poor Camisards perished: tortured publicly here and privately in the dungeons of the fortress: terrible and prolonged tortures: broken upon the wheel, burnt at the stake, gibbeted by cruel hands eager for bloodshed; fiends in human form. Catenat and Ravenel were burnt alive. Two years before, almost on this very spot, they had defeated the Royalists under the Comte de Broglie. Jonguet and Villat were broken on the wheel, then burnt. Roland Laporte, we have already seen, after falling at Castelnau, was brought to Nîmes at a cart's tail, and burnt: and his companions who would not forsake even his body, caring little what became of them now their cause was lost, were broken on the wheel whilst his body was perishing at the stake. Here, nearly a century later, the father of Guizot was guillotined.

So this Nîmes, this town of the interesting district of the Cévennes, possesses many sad historical events and recollections as a set-off against its Roman antiquities with their great charm.

Lingering about the Jardin Public, gazing down into the Roman Baths, wandering amidst the ruins of the Temple of Diana, glancing upon the magnificent winding staircase that gleamed white in the sunshine, whilst overhanging trees threw their restless shadows upon all, we were mesmerised by the subtle influence. We longed to spend many days here, and realised that Nîmes beyond all doubt has an attraction that for a time would make it a delightful sojourn. There are few more charming spots than this Jardin Public.

Next morning we took a drive to the famous aqueduct

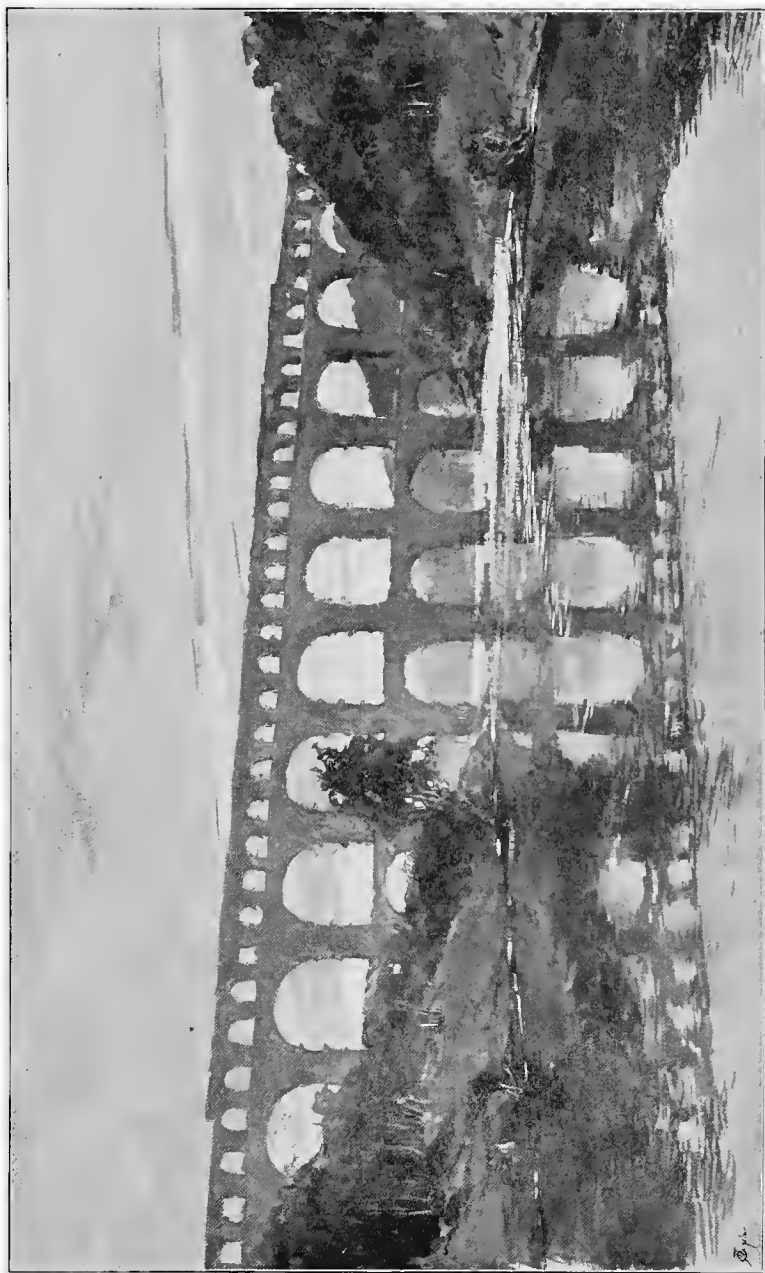
of Pont du Gard. The road was long, white and straight, the surrounding country a succession of naked ploughed fields and empty vineyards; here and there an uninteresting village breaking the monotony of the scene. After many miles we turned to the left into the more hilly and picturesque district of Pont du Gard, and very soon there rose up before us the magnificent aqueduct spanning the River Gard, or Gardon.

At the very first glance we thought it the most beautiful, refined and perfect aqueduct we had ever seen: whilst in situation it was incomparably more romantic than those of Segovia and Tarragona. It has rightly been called one of the most splendid monuments left by the Romans in France. The river reflected all its magic outlines so vividly that it seemed as a second aqueduct beneath the water, and beyond it yet another blue sky.

This aqueduct was built in the days of Agrippa in the year 19 B.C. The bridge is nearly 900 feet long and 160 feet high, and consists of three tiers of arches, each tier narrowing in ascending, the highest tier carrying the covered channel for the water, seven feet high and four feet wide. The enormous stones are without cement, the latter having only been used for the canal conveying the water. Its original length was twenty-five miles, and its very simple style of architecture only makes the magnitude more evident and more imposing.

It lies in the midst of a profound solitude, with scarcely a human habitation in sight. The rocky valley is covered with brushwood, and the banks of the winding river are luxuriant and lovely. Trees overhang the water in exquisite reflections, and all the light and blue of the sky seems to lie upon the surface. A man may walk upright through the upper channel, and the cement the Romans used to line their watercourses is still there.

But the aqueduct is not quite as the Romans left it. Some centuries ago the base of the middle arches was scooped out to form a pathway for mules. This on the one side rather takes from its beauty, but is unseen on the other. The morning was so fine, the river so alluring, that we wandered along its banks, and the scene was full of charm and repose, as we passed through



AQUEDUCT : PONT DU GARD.



small woods glinting in the sunshine that threw shadows across our path. Here, again, we were in full summer.

At length we reached some gates, which seemed to indicate a habitation within them, and as they were invitingly open we could not resist the temptation. Beyond a short avenue we caught a glimpse of grounds of rare beauty: undulations with wonderful trees, stretches of velvet grass. Yet everything seemed the result of Nature's efforts rather than of man's, always the most perfect of effects. Profound solitude reigned here also: the repose of an enchanted land.

Suddenly we met the apparent Adam of this paradise coming towards us with grave, deliberate step. Would he turn us out of Eden? No; he saluted us in token of goodwill, and proved to be the gardener.

"We are strangers. Seeing the gates open, we could not resist entering these wonderful grounds. Are we intruding?"

"Not in the least," replied Adam, politely as a grand seigneur. "Monsieur is at liberty to walk about as much as he pleases. No one will interfere with him."

"Is there a house attached to the place?" we asked, thanking him for the permission.

"Mais oui, monsieur. You have only to follow this path, turn to the right, and you will find the château."

And with that, he took off his cap again, and left us to wander at will.

We followed his directions, and in a few moments stood before the dream-château. Never had we seen such a vision of beauty; never anything so charming, so refined, so out of the world, so full of dignity and repose.

An old fifteenth-century house, with castellated towers, covered with the richest and most variegated creepers, from which looked out ancient windows with deep mullions. The tone was exquisite and matchless: we felt dazzled and bewildered. A short flight of stone steps, time-worn, stained by the lapse of centuries, led up to the entrance.

Here also, enchantment seemed to reign; utter silence and solitude; not a face looked out from any of the ancient panes. It might have been uninhabited for ages. Though we stayed long, spell-bound, the silence was never broken.

We felt inclined to go up, open the door, and wander through halls and rooms, which seemed peopled only with the ghosts of the past ; but we forbore. If we had had time, probably the host, if present, would have shown us hospitality, but we had



THE OLD CHÂTEAU.

already lingered too long, and with sighs and reluctance, slowly turned from the vision, and never turned with greater regret. We looked for Adam, but he had disappeared, and unseen and unmolested, we passed out through the gates.

The walk back was enchanting, coloured by the influence of that wonderful château. Before us, in the distance, spanning the river and casting its deep reflections, was the aqueduct. As we drew nearer, it seemed to expand and heighten, until once more we stood in the shadow of its arches. More than ever, we felt that this solitary valley of the Gardon was a land of wonders, and longed to take up our abode at the little inn. But this could not be. When we reached the inn, and the driver slowly prepared for the journey, and we found ourselves once more on the homeward road, with the aqueduct and the winding river with all its reflections in the background, we felt that we had left an earthly paradise behind us: the more fascinating and romantic that it is almost unknown and few intrude upon its sacred solitude.

## CHAPTER VII.

At the Theatre—*The Huguenots*—Sad comparison—"A sorrow's crown of sorrow"—The light of other days—Titens—An antidote—Tarascon—St. Martha and the monster—Arles—Hôtel du Forum—Obsequious hostess—Outward show—Barmecide fare—Maledictions—Charms of Arles—Days of the Cæsars—The lordly Rhône—Trinquetaille—Trophimus—The Amphitheatre—A dream of fair women—Bull-fight—Hideous men—H. C. torn asunder—Charming costumes—Theatre—Cathedral—St. Trophimus—West portal—Romanesque interior—Cloisters—Custodian—A heart of steel—In the moonbeams—A dream-world—River-scene—The sirens—Roman buildings—A rare picture—Les Aliscamps—St. Honorat—The power of youth—The Rhône at midnight.

It was a long return drive from the Pont du Gard and the old-world château. The latter bore traces of many ages and periods, and the earliest could not have been later than the fourteenth century. Our glimpse of this remote paradise was altogether insufficient. A whole summer might well be spent here in a dream existence; wandering on the banks of the river; contemplating the outlines of that rare Roman monument; watching the reflections of earth and sky upon the placid waters; strolling about the woods and grounds of the château, making friends with its owner and growing familiar with all the lovely haunts indoors and out.

The influence followed us as the strong little horse trotted over the long, straight, prosy white road leading to Nîmes, with the tame country on either side; until the town came into view and we presently drew up at the hotel.

The previous night there had been a representation at the theatre: an opera: and of all operas, Meyerbeer's dramatic *Huguenots*, taxing the highest histrionic powers. We rashly took seats on hearing that the company was excellent, and can never forget the agony of that evening. Every actor was un-

suiting to his or her part; not one sang in tune; the playing was a burlesque: now screaming and tearing about the stage; now an occasional pause and dead silence, as if stage fright had seized them all, or loss of memory. Marguerite de Valois occasionally dropped her crown, picked it up and put it on again without being in the least disconcerted; and when Valentine tore across the stage and threw up her arms to prevent the exit of Raoul, and too vigorously backed against the partition, it gave way and let her through like a perpendicular trap-door. Another time she came on the stage on the wrong side, disappeared, ran round, and with perfect ease and a charming smile reappeared on the right.

These little incidents in no way disturbed the audience, who accepted them as the comic elements of a tragedy, and thought them very amusing. It lightened the gloom.

And then the audience! The stalls were given up to ruff-raff, the select company sat above; the heat of the house was overpowering, and the odour of garlic ascending from below soon made the place intolerable. Long before the end we gave up the struggle and left with a racking headache, more knocked up with the ordeal than we should have thought possible. But it brought back vividly and painfully the happy experiences of days long past. "A sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things"—the words seemed to haunt us as we passed through the silent streets. Days when Titians in all her glory took the part of Valentine and played and sang it as it had never been played and sung before and never will be again in this world: and they who can remember her will say it is not asserting too much. Those were indeed the days of "Grand opera," and they seem to have passed away for ever. To all who appreciated the perfection of that past, the present is very hopeless. But this is a digression.

The long drive the next day, the Pont du Gard, the aqueduct, the old château, proved a complete antidote. Never a more wholesome medicine.

After that drive, our moments in Nîmes were numbered. We had just time for a last fond look at the wonderful Colosseum, the Roman Bath and Temple of Diana, and then away to "green fields and pastures new."

This, however, is a mere figure of speech. Our green fields were represented by houses: the ancient, historic and splendid monuments of Arles; where nothing resembling green fields is to be seen nearer than the tall straight trees of the "Street of Tombs," and the spreading branches of the boulevards.

It was a short journey, and the only town of importance we passed on the road was Tarascon, which lies picturesquely opposite Beaucaire on the left bank of the Rhône. But we did not see even the ghost of the monster from which the town is supposed to derive its name. A terrible monster, says tradition, conquered at last by St. Martha, who landed here with Mary Magdalene: her only weapon the cross, with which she tamed the creature and attached it to her girdle, so that it meekly followed her about.

St. Martha is accordingly the patron saint of the town, and her tomb is in the church called after her name: a fine fourteenth-century building with a Romanesque portal. From the railway we thought the place looked well worth a short visit.

Approaching Arles we were struck by the appearance of the distant ruins of Mont Major crowning a height. In fact the whole view was impressive, until the town shut it out, as the train steamed into the station.

As usual, the first impression was disappointing. The lumbering omnibus rattled over cobble stones in the narrowest, most uninteresting of streets. Arles, the most ancient town of Southern France, has, like all other towns, been renewed and rebuilt in its most habitable parts until no vestige of antiquity remains; and it was through these thoroughfares that the crazy omnibus took its way.

At the Hôtel du Forum, madame, a very substantial lady indeed, met us with empressement: and if bows and empressement meant anything, we had fallen in clover. We were soon disillusioned. Madame sat in her bureau dispensing fine words with the air of a duchess, and calmly making out her accounts; but the *salle à manger* was the worst on record; the fare so uneatable and so abominably dressed that we had daily to repair exhausted nature by sundry visits to the pastrycook's. There at least was no Barmecide feast, but delicious con-

fections; whether they were wholesome was another matter. We took the risk.

The Hôtel du Forum was about the most uncomfortable in existence; so much so that Arles becomes impossible to stay in, nor would we ever stay there again. Happily, in many surrounding places from which Arles may be visited, comfort is to be found—of which the Hôtel d'Europe at Avignon is by far the best. Here the hotel was badly organised, or rather disorganised in every way. The servants were rough, rude and unready, though madame, with all her faults, was suavity itself. Her servants made up for it. In vain we tried to win them over by gentle arts. Only on the last morning did they put on a slight comeliness of manner—expecting a *pourboire*. But for once we were stern and gave them nothing: and if maledictions did not follow our omnibus, the expression of their faces sadly belied them.

Apart from the discomforts of the hotel, what charms does Arles not possess! Like Nîmes, it has wonderful Roman antiquities; but more than Nîmes, it has a most interesting church, whose west portal and cloisters would alone repay a visit to the town.

The origin of Arles is doubtful, but in days long gone by it played an important part in the world. Under Julius Cæsar it was a rival of Marseilles, for in those days the sea was much nearer to Arles than it is now. In 2000 years it has receded a distance of twenty-eight miles, and what was once a flourishing sea-port is now an inland town.

It must have been a very splendid place when Cæsar ruled. The Rhône emptied itself here into the blue waters of the Mediterranean: the rocks of Mont Major, now high and dry and far off from the restless waves, formed a magnificent and impregnable island: the surrounding plains were covered with the waters of the deep sea, blue as the heavens, and, on occasion, calm and placid and beautiful as a dream. But the ages have rolled on and the sea has taken its course, and now it is only to be seen from some rocky height, shimmering far away in the sunshine.

Yet Arles still has water on which to find its reflections. The Rhône runs past in all its splendour and dignity, a wide,

incomparable river. Portions of the old Roman quays still remain, to show one the greatness that once was: and from these quays you obtain fine views of old Roman houses and mediæval monuments that carry you back in spirit to the days when surely the skies, for all their perpetual youth, were younger than they are now.

A modern and unsightly iron bridge spans the river, uniting Arles with its quaint suburb of Trinquetaille; and if you have posted yourself up in the history of the province, you will know that in the very place of this modern erection was a gem of an old bridge that formed part of the famous *Via Aurelian*, a high road that, extending from Rome to Cadiz, took *Arelate* on its way. Great days they were, and *Arelate* or Arles was the flourishing capital of its small but mighty kingdom.

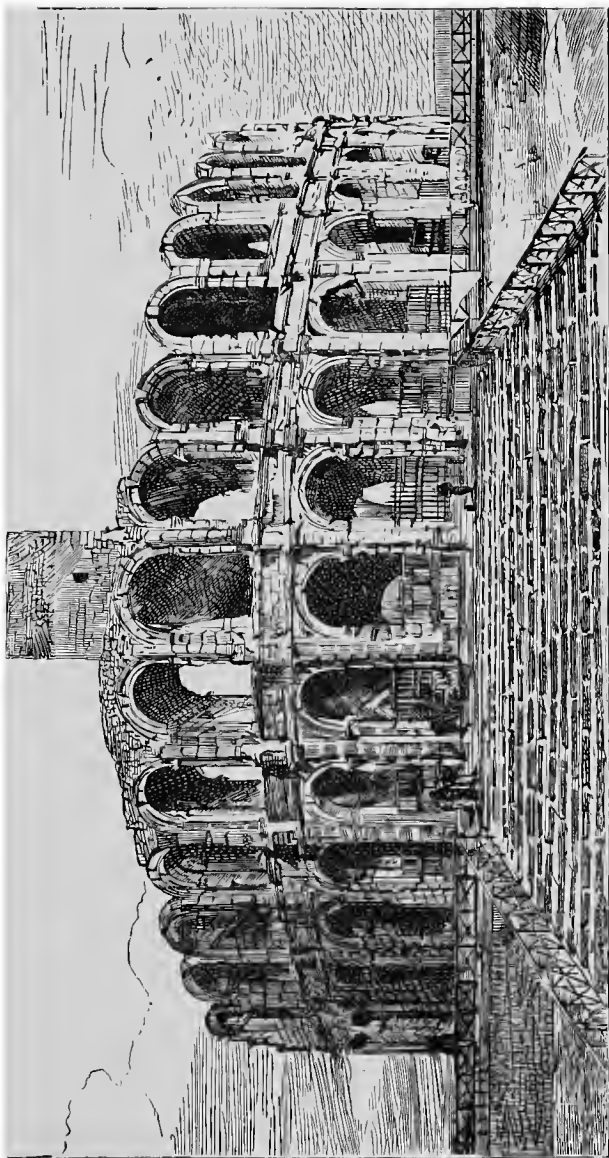
For all belonging to Rome, and all connected with Rome, was mighty. Here Constantine was often wont to come; and his mother, to whom he owed so much, was no doubt often with him; and here Trophimus, St. Paul's disciple, preached Christianity, just as he preached it elsewhere. Any follower of St. Paul, greatest of men, should have made untold converts, for surely his mantle fell upon his disciples with mesmeric influence.

Following the picturesque quays you see fragments of a Roman bridge on either bank, but the great centre is no more. You wonder whether time, or destruction, or some untoward torrent is answerable for the gap; but remembering how the Romans built, one of the three alternatives may surely be dismissed. Time has only beautified their work.

On the north and east sides of the town you still see the Roman ramparts, below which the tree-lined boulevards of modern days have been placed.

It is within these boulevards that the nucleus of the town exists; all that is modern; tortuous, narrow, ill-paved streets that make walking a pilgrimage; streets not too savoury; not too well kept; unhealthy; gloomy and depressing by day, badly lighted by night.

But Arles can afford this, for the sake of her gems; the wonderful Roman remains that come upon one with such astonishing abruptness and surprise. You turn the corner of a narrow, crooked street, and suddenly there breaks upon you the



AMPHITHEATRE : ARLES.



startling view of the magnificent Amphitheatre. Before turning that corner you were in all the prosaic element of the nineteenth century. In the twinkling of an eye you are transported to the very beginning of the Christian era.

This is the largest amphitheatre in France, and so far the most famous, but not so perfectly preserved as that of Nîmes. It rises gigantically against the blue sky, a building 500 yards round, with two storeys of sixty arches, the lower Doric, the upper Corinthian. There is a tower at three of the four points of the compass, but the coping stone has crumbled away, giving the building the picturesque appearance of a semi-ruin.

Yet it is no ruin, and may defy the ages to come. Enormous blocks of stone piled one upon the other are kept together without cement by the strength of their own weight and by splendour of construction. There are five massive corridors, and in the days of their glory forty-three tiers of seats made it possible for 25,000 to 30,000 spectators to view the games and bull-fights.

The three towers date from the eighth century and are probably Saracenic. These do not add to the beauty of the building, and were used solely as watch-towers in the days when, like that of Nîmes, the Amphitheatre of Arles had been turned into a gigantic fortress: a fate that also overtook Vespasian's Colosseum at Rome.

From the highest tower, you obtain a magnificent view of the town; of the country beyond; the far-off Alpine hills, the famous plains of Crau; through which the Rhône takes its majestic course, upwards to Beaucaire and Tarascon, downwards to Marseilles and the Mediterranean.

These wonderful plains cover a vast area of 75 square miles, and are bounded by the Rhône on the west, by the Alpines on the north, by far-reaching, reflecting lagoons on the east, and by the far-off Mediterranean on the south. It is covered with shingle, said to be brought by the Rhône from the Alpine glaciers. In remote days, when Arles was a seaport it was a bay of the Mediterranean, into which the lovely little Duranse flowed. The Duranse remains to this day, and a very interesting excursion may be made into the country through which it takes its course.

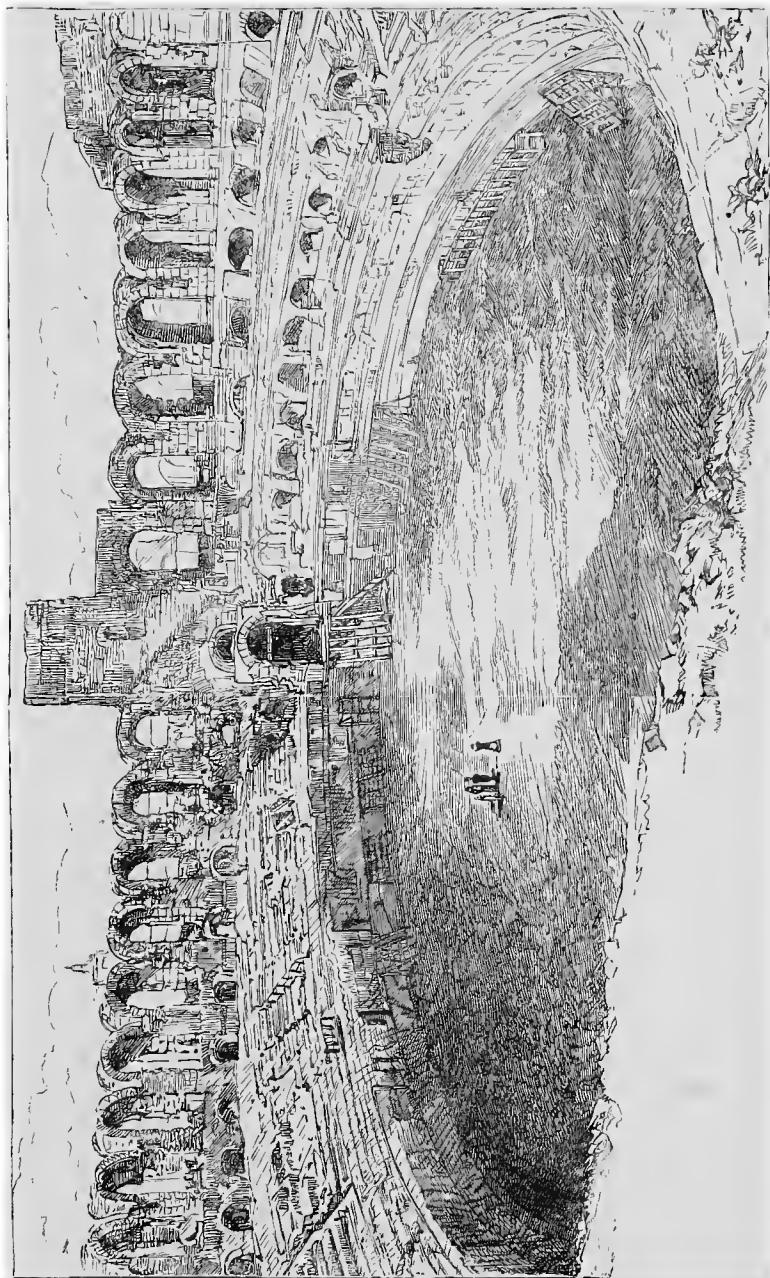
So on a sunny day it is a gorgeous glowing view that one sees from the Saracenic towers of Arles. The broad river catching the sunbeams looks here and there like a sheet of molten gold hurrying towards the great blue sea in which to yield up its life.

Looking into the interior of the Amphitheatre from the tower, it appears much more of a ruin than when gazing upon it from the exterior, with its massive blocks of stone and perfect Doric and Corinthian arches. But the ruin is more in appearance than in fact. Here Sunday after Sunday, in the season, an immense crowd assembles and the bull-fight takes place; a harmless affair, a somewhat childish amusement. No one is killed, and even the poor bull is allowed to escape unhurt—that he may fight another day; horses there are none. Now and then there is a moment's seeming jeopardy. A foot slips; the bull apparently has it all his own way, and prepares himself for a game of pitch and toss. The men of Arles turn pale, the fair women of Arles shriek gently and hide their faces; here and there one more delicate and sensitive swoons away into unconsciousness—we saw and heard them do it.

But the danger passes; there never was any real danger at all; the bull's attention is directed to another channel by a red rag or an artful prod from behind, and the prostrate victim jumps up and runs away. The men recover their complexion, the women unbury their faces, the sensitive swooners by some occult instinct know the danger is over, and come back to life. There may be a little coquetry and affectation in all this, after the manner of fair women, but the play is natural and well acted, and far more interesting than that other senseless play in the arena.

Fair women? They are indeed fair women. We had long heard of the charm of the Arlésiennes, but our imagination fell short of the truth. We never anticipated such a galaxy of beauty—beauty of a noble and splendid type. They are said to have retained the old Roman type of the early centuries, and apparently it is so. In no other way can one explain the phenomenon—for it is nothing less than a wonder.

Their forms are magnificent; they hold themselves like queens, walk like queens; their heads are set upon their



INTERIOR OF THE AMPHITHEATRE : ARLES.



shoulders as though they were mistresses of the world. Their faces are perfect, some resembling the Grecian, others the Roman type. Their eyes are soft and beautiful, their complexions clear and full of delicate physical health; their features are well formed, and the parted lips often reveal perfect sets of teeth.

In a word, never had we seen at one time such an assemblage of fair women.

With it all there was a distinct refinement of gesture and movement, of voice, feature and expression. And yet very many of them belonged to the humbler ranks of life; in spite of their patrician appearance — the proud patrician beauty of Rome — they were far removed from those of gentle birth and breeding. All they possessed of beauty, grace and refinement was in spite of themselves, inborn, the inheritance of the ages. Thus it was innate, and sat upon them so unconsciously that the charm was heightened



To this was added another great charm: the charm of taste in dress; a costume infinitely becoming; rich in its way; devoid of angles. They were clothed in the softest and most harmonious of colours; delicate shades one looks for in vain elsewhere. Their gowns fell in soft and graceful folds, draping, not concealing their admirable figures. Some wore small shawls over the shoulders; plain, or richly embroidered, occasionally of drooping lace. Their bodices were often also richly embroidered; or a covering of white net half concealed the whiteness of the beautiful shoulders. Some wore no caps, and their well-poised heads were adorned with coronets of hair that would have graced a Drawing-room at the Court of St. James's. Others wore a sort of twisted ribbon at the back of the head, very

becoming and artistic. All the modern horrors of hats with ungainly feathers, erect and waving like the plumes of a hearse—of such abominations the Arlésiennes know nothing. Long may it be so.

One strange thing we noticed: an apparent want of sympathy between men and women. The women walked and grouped by themselves, the men did likewise. There might almost have been antipathy between the sexes. This would have seemed strange and incomprehensible, but that Nature herself had perhaps done something to bring about the catastrophe. For the men were as ugly, and plebeian, and ungainly, and unintelligent-looking as the women were the exact opposite in all ways. The comparison was painful—one so pitied these angelic creatures mated to men of the lowest order of creation: a violent contrast, an incongruous condition of things.

The unceasing marvel was, how such men could be the brothers, sons, husbands and fathers of this exceptional female race. It seemed utterly impossible, yet has existed for centuries, and apparently may go on for ever.

We watched them narrowly one sunny afternoon in the seats and corridors of the arena. The refinement of the building, its antiquity and splendid outlines formed the exact setting for these queenly women. The men were beneath notice: worthy of the barbarous childish sport going on below. The women walked to and fro in the corridors, or stood in groups; but whether walking or standing, beauty and gracefulness distinguished them.

It was to see this wonderful sight—not to be seen away from Arles—that we had entered the lion's den—or, in other words, the bull-ring. To what was going on in the arena we gave no heed, cast never a glance. There was far too much artistic feasting for the eyes round about, to bestow one thought upon the play. Had it been a real bull-fight, not even the fair women would have tempted us; but as already stated, it was only a sham fight; no one is ever hurt, and nothing terrible ever happens.

The susceptible H. C., who had never seen a sham bull-fight, much less a real one, was torn by conflicting emotions. He was as a man divided, endeavouring to keep one eye fixed on

the arena, the other on the houris in his immediate neighbourhood. The result was not altogether satisfactory, and when all was over he felt he had missed his mark, grasped the shadow and let go the substance.

We had left him to himself, and whenever the completed circle brought us back to his point, it was to note a harassed expression indicating a mind ill at ease.

It is difficult to forgive France for encouraging these barbarous sports. As we write we hear of a toreador in the fair city of Valencia dying of his wounds. They are out of harmony with the refined and gentle character of the Gaul of our experience. But the French character is changing very much from North to South: and in the South they have always been much more allied to the hot-blooded Spaniard and fiery impulsive Italian, than to their kinsmen of the North. In fact North and South are not kinsmen, but separate and distinct races, living different lives, speaking a different language. The Provençal is rough and rude, revengeful and vindictive, and his swarthy complexion proves him somewhat allied to the African race. The men of Arles were not swarthy; we are only on the very fringe of Provence, and must penetrate farther south for the true type; but the little rift within the lute is already evident, and its influence is distinctly felt.

Only a few days ago, happening to be in Picardy, a French keen and close observer of human nature said to us: "Monsieur, the French are changing; there is decadence in the air; they are becoming brutish and losing their intelligence." Let us hope the tide of decadence may yet turn backward.

They were very quiet and orderly that day in Arles. There was nothing of the mad excitement we had seen on a similar occasion in Valencia. When all was over, the men dispersed through the corridors and passages to the various exits as quietly as people going out of church. In their movement they were almost boorish, lethargic; and they went their way—and the women went theirs.

The sham bull-fight not only brought out all the people of the town, but crowds assembled from the country round; bands played in the streets; Arles was en fête.

On ordinary occasions it is a very sleepy place—a quiet

provincial place, with little movement about it, and no bustle or excitement. Only on these fête days are the women in evidence, turning out in gala dresses, and for the moment lighting up the dull streets with a charm no other town can boast of to an equal extent.

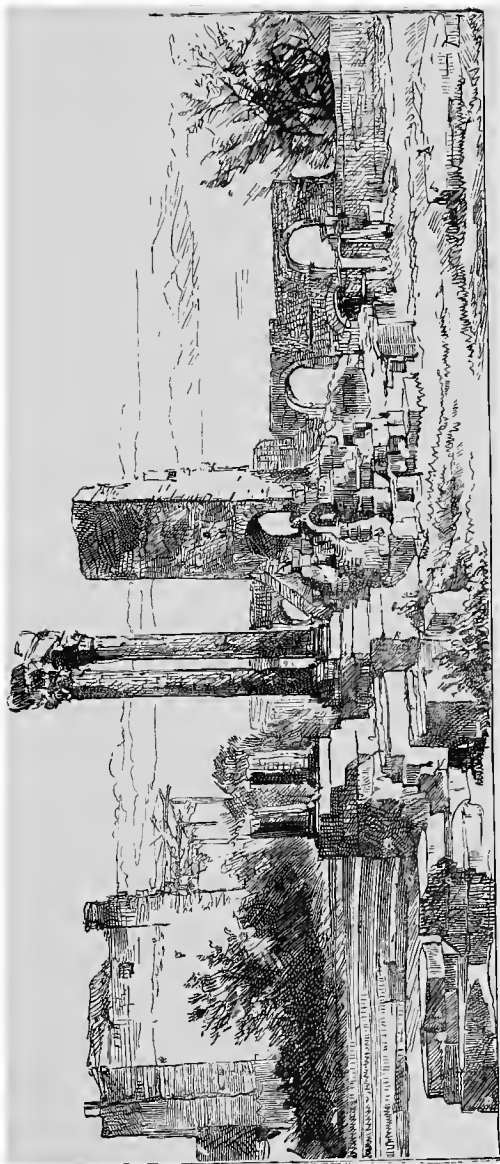
But, as we have said, Arles is rich in vestiges of the past: its Roman remains. Within a stone's throw of the Amphitheatre are the ruins of the Theatre; ruins that have become mere fragments, but are still beautiful and interesting. Here you might almost fancy yourself gazing upon a part of the Roman Forum. Two Corinthian columns still stand crowned by their entablature and outlined against the blue sky, marked by graceful proportions and refined beauty. One of the columns is of African, the other of Carrara marble. Behind them may still be seen the stage walls or proscenium. Many fragments of pillars stand about.

The Theatre is said to have been begun in the reign of Augustus, and finished in the third century. In the course of time it became buried, and remained so until the seventeenth century. Many of the disclosed treasures are in the splendid Museum facing the Cathedral, whilst the celebrated Venus of Arles, also found here, is in the Louvre collection.

Standing before this remarkable ruin, one is vividly carried back in spirit to the days of ancient Rome. Not in Rome itself is the influence more felt: and if all these monuments and remains scattered through the length and breadth of the Lower Valley of the Rhône could be brought together, they would form an assemblage of antiquities that even Rome could hardly equal.

In the walls of the proscenium one traces the doors through which the actors went in and out. The stage must have been very large. In the semicircle devoted to the audience one still finds some of the seats, where they assembled to the number of 16,000.

Passing from this wonderful ruin down a narrow side street you soon reach the square which contains the Cathedral, Museum, and Hôtel de Ville: the latter a curious, and to some extent handsome, but not very interesting building dating back to the year 1673: a debased age in architecture.



REMAINS OF THE THEATRE.



In the centre of the square rises a remarkable Roman obelisk composed of a single shaft of grey granite taken from the quarries of the Esterels—that isolated but interesting group.



A FRAGMENT OF THE FORUM.

of hills, with their cork and pine forests, that rise in the Province of the Var, overshadowing St. Raphael and a country where again so many Roman remains are to be found.

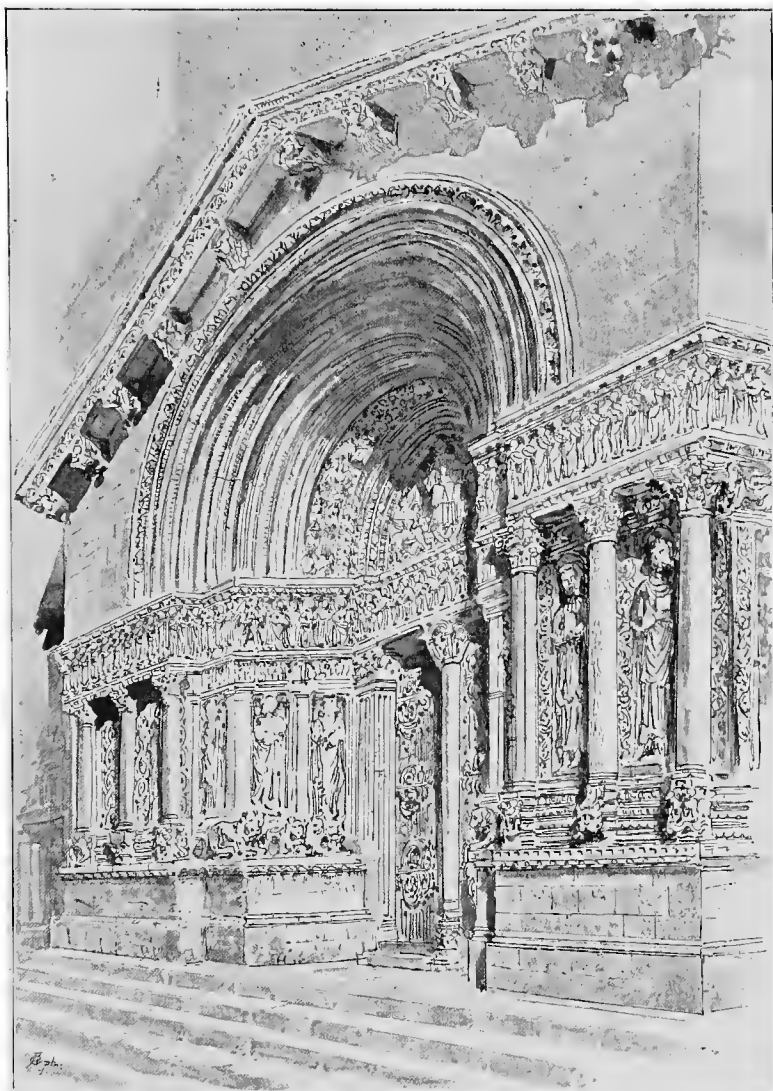
The obelisk belonged to an ancient circus outside the town, of which not a vestige remains, and for many centuries lay buried in the mud of the Rhône, where probably many other treasures still exist, biding their time: other obelisks, it may be, or a Venus to rival that of Milo and Arles, or gems from the great palace of Constantine, that stretched down from the Place du Forum—where stood the Forum—to the banks of the river: a gigantic building indeed, rivalling Rome's Palace of the Cæsars.

Here, gazing upon the broad river, within sight and sound of the sea, those Roman conquerors came, and thought out their mighty plans, and vanquished worlds, and never dreamed that a day would come when the glory of the empire should depart and become nothing but a recollection and a name.

Very near the resuscitated obelisk is the cathedral, dedicated to St. Trophimus, first Bishop of Arles, and, as we have seen, a disciple of St. Paul. The reader will remember that he is mentioned in the Acts, and again by St. Paul in the Second Epistle to Timothy. "Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick"—Miletum being probably a misprint for Miletus. From this sickness he evidently recovered, and lived to carry on his master's work after that master had suffered martyrdom: journeying to the French shores of the Mediterranean, and there preaching Christianity and making converts.

The eye is at once arrested by the richness and splendour of the West Portal. The building itself is very ancient, and has been frequently altered and restored. It is said to have been placed on the ruins of the Roman Prætorium, and was consecrated under Constantine in the year 606.

The doorway, however, is distinctly twelfth century and Romanesque. It projects from the main building, and is very curious and interesting. Its chief feature is a deeply recessed semicircular arch, extremely bold and beautiful in outline. The deep mouldings rest upon a richly-sculptured frieze, forming the lintel of the portal and resting on three pillars on either side the doorway. There are innumerable figures and heads of animals quaintly carved, and the piers rest upon carved lions. Many statues of apostles and saints are conspicuous, amongst them St. Trophimus and St. Stephen the Martyr.



WEST PORTAL OF ST. TROPHIMUS.



It was Trophimus who, with Titus, journeyed to Corinth and conveyed St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Trophimus was a Gentile and a native of Ephesus; and though a great favourite with St. Paul, he once brought him into trouble, being the innocent cause of the uproar in Jerusalem, during which the doors of the Temple were closed and Paul was apprehended. The likeness of Trophimus in the doorway of Arles was no doubt left to the imagination of the sculptor, and in any case has been much altered by time.

In the semicircular space over the doorway is an image of the Saviour sitting in judgment: and portions of the frieze represent scenes in the Last Judgment, somewhat grotesque, it must be admitted, but very clever in execution, the good rising to heaven, but looking scarcely ethereal enough to float in air, the bad consigned to flames and torment, and, to do them justice, with every appearance of deserving their fate. In the archivolt are rows of cherubim. The whole doorway is a magnificent example of the Romanesque, standing out conspicuously amidst doorways for interest and extreme richness of detail.

The interior is Romanesque and eleventh century, but has been much altered, other styles have been introduced, and much of its effect destroyed. It strikes one at once as bold and naked, destitute of ornamentation, in violent contrast with the rich west portal, which alone makes the church remarkable. The apse and choir are sixteenth-century flamboyant, distinctly unpleasing. The nave is the best and most dignified part; long and lofty, in pointed work of the twelfth century, but plain and cold.

Apart from the west doorway, the gem and attraction of the cathedral are the cloisters. They are very curious and beautiful, exquisite in tone, and of various dates.

The north side is of the Carlovingian period, going back to the ninth century: the east side is thirteenth century, the west fourteenth, and the south sixteenth. Two of the sides have Romanesque arches, and two Gothic. These rest on double shafts—a detail so often seen in cloisters—carved with figures of saints. The capitals of the pillars represent Scriptural subjects.

In the strong lights and shadows thrown by the sunshine, and again in the twilight of evening the cloisters were a dream of beauty. The poor custodian was a man who had all but lost his sight in a mining accident, and excited one's sympathy as in melancholy tones he narrated how he had only the faintest glimmering left: sufficient to distinguish between night and day and to see men as shadows walking. So they had given him the custody of the cloisters, but it carried no pay with it, and he depended on the charity of visitors for his daily bread.

We accepted the story in good faith. The melancholy tones might be a little too woe-begone, the faint glimmer of light reveal men as more substance than shadow—we did not criticise or cross-question. But we wished to see the cloisters by moonlight, and he promised to get the keys from the sacristan; “for,” said he, “every night I am locked up like a child, I and my wife and children; and if we want to get out, we cannot do so.”

Alas, we could not ourselves come across the sacristan, and to the blind keeper he was tyrannical and hard-hearted.

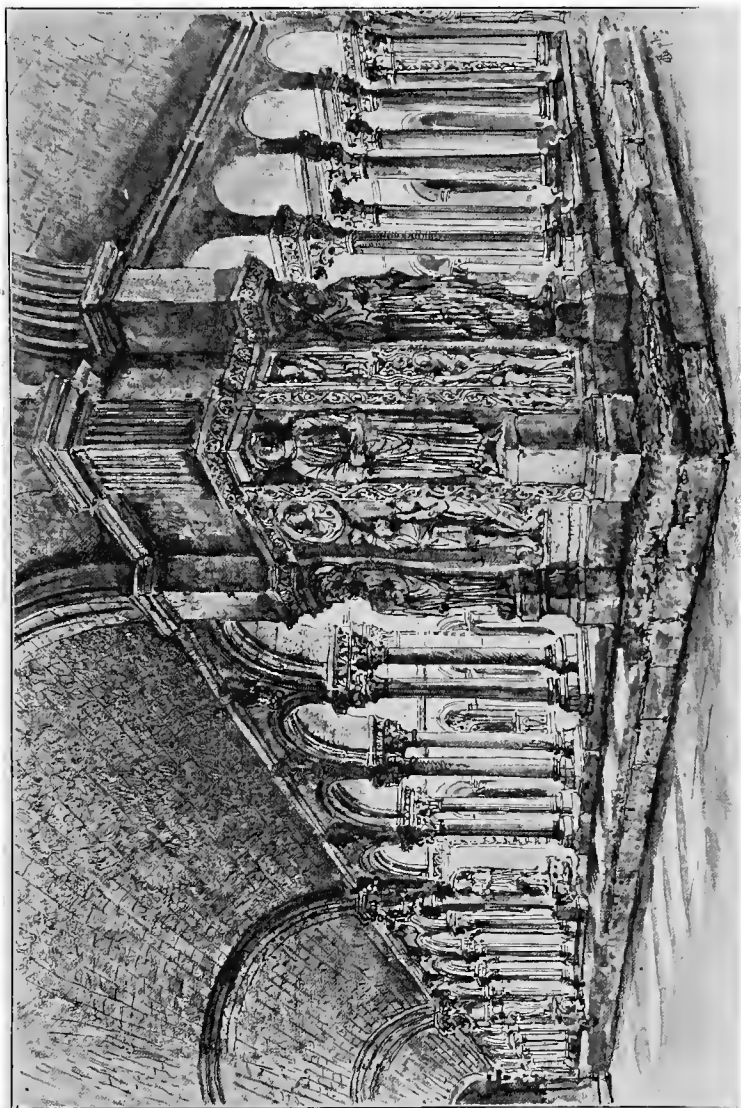
At nine o'clock that evening, when the moon was well up, and light fleecy clouds were sailing across the dark blue sky, we made our way up the narrow side street and knocked at the quaint and beautiful doorway admitting to the cloisters.

In a few moments we heard shuffling footsteps coming down the vaulted passages: the cautious, hesitating footsteps of one who sees dimly or not at all. We pictured the stooping figures passing over the pavement, chequered by the strong lights and shadows thrown by the moon, the deep outlines of the double shafts, the pointed or circular arches. Then a sliding shutter was withdrawn from the grating, and the melancholy face filled the open space.

“Why don't you open?” we asked. “Where are the keys?”

There came a deep, long-drawn sigh.

“Hélas, messieurs, that sacristan has a heart of steel, as hard and cold as these stones on which I stand. I asked him for the keys. No. I begged them as a favour. No. I told him ces messieurs wanted to see the cloisters by moonlight. He



CLOISTERS OF ST. TROPHIMUS.



pretended not to believe me: said moonlight was all nonsense and sentiment: the cloisters were much finer by daylight: he would give the keys to no one without the special permission of Monsieur le Doyen. In vain I pleaded, remonstrated. He went off jingling his keys in my ears, and humming 'Au clair de la lune, mon ami pierrot.' He is a scélérat, that sacristan."

We echoed the sentiment, and hoped we should come across the sacristan on the morrow. H. C. proposed getting a ladder and scaling the walls; but as we were not cats, danger attended the experiment. We might suddenly tread on air and drop into unseen depths. There were also the authorities to be reckoned with. So we declined the interesting adventure and contented ourselves with a limited view of the cloisters through the grating.

It looked indeed a dream-world sleeping in the moonbeams. The passages were in darkness, excepting where the beams penetrated with a flood of silver light, white and pure and cold. Strong shadows lay athwart the pavement. Over all was the solemn silence and repose of night. More than ever we longed to enter, and mentally prepared a strong discourse for the sacristan when we found him.

But even the glimpse we had was a delight; a scene to be remembered; whilst from the square bell-tower rising above it all, there presently rang, in slow sonorous tones, the hour of ten. As the last vibration died away, we wished the custodian good-night, bade him be of good cheer, promised to use our influence not only to get the hard-hearted sacristan despatched to some other scene of labour, but to procure him the custody of the keys as well as of the cloisters. He thanked us, wished us bonne nuit, closed the sliding shutter, and once more we heard the receding footsteps shuffling through the chequered passages.

We stood for a moment outside the fine doorway. It was a curious, ecclesiastical nook, lying back in a recess from the street. In spite of the moonlight there were dark impenetrable depths about us; outlines of walls and slanting roofs and overhanging gables: an air of mystery. Ghosts seemed to lurk in all the dark corners: "or, might they not be assassins armed with daggers?" suggested H. C. more prosaically and practically.

But assassins flee moonlit nights: and the queen was beautiful and brilliant, and his teeth-chattering suggestion fell harmlessly to the ground.

The pale fleecy clouds were still hurrying along, white, ethereal and beautiful as angels' wings, pursuing their rapid flight, silent and shadowy as spectres. But the charm of the spot had somewhat disappeared with the closing of the shutter, and we soon took our departure.

In the great square the obelisk was casting a lengthened shadow; and in the moonlight the west portal, etherealised and refined, was more than ever a dream. The streets were silent and deserted as we made our way through the thoroughfares where once stood the great palace of the Cæsars—or shall we say of Constantine?—and presently found ourselves on the ancient quay gazing upon the fast-flowing river.

Never was lovelier river-scene. It caught up the moonbeams in shimmering silver gleams, a myriad lights and flashes: and we felt sure the sirens had come straight up from the Mediterranean and were holding court for our special benefit. A strong temptation seized us to plunge into the depths and test the fancy, but the glamour of the night had left us just sufficient reason to know that the only result would be a cold bath and a rude awakening—and perhaps an attack of influenza.

So we contented ourselves with worshipping the sirens from a distance, and refused to be charmed though they charmed never so wisely. The water swirled round the edges of the ruined Roman bridge, which year by year must be growing less—like the heat of the sun—since continual dropping wears away a stone. Here and there a barge lined the quay, where nothing stirred, and nothing was heard but the occasional baying of a dog at the moon. They were very picturesque these solitary barges, lying under the moonbeams, all form and detail romantically softened by the silvery light.

On the other side were the ancient buildings going back to the days of the Romans: the remains of the Palace of Constantine; innumerable gabled outlines, old walls, and mullioned windows, all sleeping, softened and subdued by the pale, magic light of the moon: a wonderful effect, and we had it to our-



LES ALISCAMPS (STREET OF TOMBS).



selves. As we stood gazing, nothing broke the stillness of the night but the quiet rush and swirl of the river and the occasional whine of a dog keeping guard on a barge. A magic scene indeed, than which the haunt of the sirens could not have been more beautiful, and probably would not have been half so wholesome. Beyond the river rose the outlines of the suburb of Trinquetaille silhouetted against the dark night sky, lying in a death-like silence and repose.

Earlier in the day we had paid a visit to another scene where reigned a sort of death-in-life—or the opposite—in broad daylight. This was Les Aliscamps—the *Elisii Campi*, or Champs Elysées of Arles: where the old Romans buried their dead: a very different idea and association from the Elysian Fields of the French capital, where, in the whirligig of life, death is the last thought to intrude.

These of Arles are very ancient. Ariosto mentions them in the '*Orlando Furioso*;' Dante speaks of them in the '*Inferno*.' The cemetery, of great extent, was consecrated by St. Trophimus for Christian burial. Its fame was world-wide, and from far and near it was the ambition of many that here they should find their last resting-place.

The Christian burial-ground was marked off from the Pagan: a vast area that has gradually contracted, so that ploughed fields and vineyards may now be seen where once reposed the ashes of the dead marked by crosses and sarcophagi. Some of the most remarkable of these have been removed to the museum of Arles—one of the richest museums of antiquities in existence for its size—and others have been gathered together and placed on each side the *Allée des Tombeaux* or Street of Tombs.

This avenue is the first and chief thing to strike the visitor, with its air of dignity and calm restfulness. The tall poplars rustle and murmur in the wind, and their words must be grave and melancholy. At the far end of the avenue rises the interesting and remarkable church of St. Honorat. It is falling into ruin, but the remaining portion is of such extreme solidity that it will surely defy all time. Part of the church is very ancient, and part was rebuilt in the eleventh century in the Romanesque style. It was never completed. The beautiful octagonal tower with its two stages is also Romanesque.

The crypt is very curious, and probably the oldest remaining portion.

The place is still used as a cemetery by the people of Arles, but the surrounding atmosphere, only a short distance from the gates, was anything but funereal. Within a few yards there were drinking booths and cafés, and men and boys playing at bowls, and pitch and toss, making hay whilst the sun shone, gathering their rosebuds. It comes but once in a lifetime, this youth, with its great power for enjoyment and freedom from dull care. They made the most of their twenty years, and never troubled themselves about the wisdom of the Preacher.

Like the Amphitheatre, the Roman Theatre, the Forum, and the ruins of Trouille, les Aliscamps carried you vividly back to Roman times, but here clothed in more sombre and serious thought. *Memento mori* stood out in all the surrounding atmosphere. Man, it has been said, thinks everyone mortal but himself: in the sombre avenues of this Roman burial-ground there was no room for that comfortable delusion. Time makes no exceptions, and has been preaching its lesson for two thousand years in les Aliscamps.

From this to the moonlit Rhône, with its midnight calm and hush, there was but a step, though divided by hours. It was still a death-in-life scene, but of a different sort, and with a distinct and separate influence. Under the night sky, the silvery moonlight, it was all poetry and romance: the romance of a sleeping world unmindful of this marvellous beauty of nature reposing in all the mystery of darkness. We could have spent the livelong night marking the outlines of the ancient buildings, looking down upon the fragments of that ancient Roman bridge, watching the silent stars as they travelled westward with their queen, listening to the on-rushing of the river, and the song it for ever sings.

“The fountains mingle with the river,  
And the rivers with the ocean;  
The winds of heaven mix for ever  
With a sweet emotion.

\* \* \* \* \*

And the sunlight clasps the earth,  
And the moonbeams kiss the sea!”

No sea here to-night : but in imagination we saw it thirty miles away : that deep blue, tideless, most interesting and historical of all seas, on which this same moon was throwing all her brilliant light.

We turned away into the prosy streets of the town, and felt like those who return to a banquet room where the garlands are dead and the lights extinguished. All romance in these dark hours lay in the wake of that wonderful river taking its course through the Valley of the Rhône.

Nevertheless, it is certain that Arles, with its living beauties and dead and decaying wonders : its visions of fair women, street of tombs, crumbling monuments, the wonderful portal of its cathedral and its magnificent cloisters : is one of the magic towns of the world, where the young will lose their hearts—and heads—and the old may dream their dreams : where youth may pay its homage to beauty, and the antiquarian may worship his less uncertain mistress. And who shall say he has not the best of it ?

As we made our way back to our most uncomfortable inn, where nothing in the shape of romance could live, all the fair women were wisely cultivating their roses in beauty sleep. Not a creature was abroad. We wandered round for a last look at the Amphitheatre and the Forum, the Obelisk and the splendid portal of St. Trophimus, and could but echo the words : “*Arles est un véritable musée en plein air.*” If only the landlady of the Hôtel du Forum would place herself in a glass case amongst the effigies, and allow someone to take her post who would not invite guests to a feast and place empty dishes before them !

## CHAPTER VIII.

Excursions — Embarrassment of riches — A vision of St. Trophimus — Rude awakeniug — Making hay in sunshine — Drawing lots — Mont Major — Wonderful ruins — Strange guardiau — History of the abbey — Cloisters — Confessional of St. Trophimus — “Sufficient justification” — A wehr-wolf — Les Baux — Curious legend — Ancient home of the Grimaldis — Eagle-owls — Our admirable guide — Strange apparition — Church of St. Vincent — A solitary life — Guide’s little house — Grim holds a Levee — A truce — “He who hesitates is lost” — Good-bye to Wonderland — Grim comes to England — Arrival creates consternation — Alarmed porter — Unpacking Grim — “Dead beat” — Propitiations — Grim at the Zoo — Two Roman monuments — Gothic cloisters — A discovery.

“ARLES, voyez-vous, monsieur, is the rallying-point for numberless excursions. The neighbourhood has inexhaustible treasures. You must see Les Baux, Mont Major, St. Rémy. There is La Camargue, with its Saintes Maries; there is St. Gilles, the dream of the artist. None of these things can be passed over. You might spend a week or a month here and still find that you had left too soon.”

So spoke our majestic landlady, and her words were words of wisdom.

“True, madame,” we returned, seeing our way to a delicate hint; “but excursions are exhausting, and if the inner man is not well fortified, he breaks down. The human frame is only a limited liability machine after all.”

“Eh, bien, monsieur,” retorted madame quickly, “you have an excellent *salle-à-manger*, and have only to profit by it.”

“You utter more than the truth, madame. An excellent *salle* indeed, but as to the *manger*——”

Here madame rose abruptly at sound of a distant voice

inaudible to other ears, and with a sonorous "*Je viens*" to this imaginary summons she marched off with a flurried expression but great rectitude of deportment to unseen regions.

It was an embarrassment of riches. What was to be done first? If we could not do all, which would be best left undone? Arles itself we had fairly learned by heart; had haunted the cloisters until we knew the direction of every shadow at every hour of the day; had studied the West Front until in a half dream, half trance, St. Trophimus came down from his niche and with a deep obeisance offered us St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians.

"Eighteen centuries ago," he said in a sepulchral voice, "I had the honour of bearing this to the Church at Corinth. Paul, my beloved master, commended it to me with great earnestness. The smallness of his stature was quite forgotten in the fervour of his expression and the fire of his eye. If he had any weakness of vision, it did not appear, and not in that lay his thorn in the flesh. Never have I seen such eyes, never such zeal and devotion. He carried everything before him as the waves of the sea sweep salvage to the shore. To hear him was to be convinced; to follow him was to be converted; to live with him was to love him; to be bound to him hand and foot, heart and soul."

"What, beloved Trophimus, was Paul's great power?" we asked.

"His influence over men," replied the saint without hesitation. "It was extraordinary and magnetic. His immense sympathy, his infinite capacity for loving; his determination to save all men by bringing them to a knowledge of the truth; love, sympathy, will-power so great that it made him seem unusually severe, and occasionally perhaps somewhat self-exalted and self-conscious. Above all, the consistency of his life. St. Paul! most humble of men, esteeming himself least of all, happy only in doing good, willing to suffer for the truth, glorifying his life in his death. Oh, my beloved Paul, how willingly would I have died for thee!"

"Dear Trophimus, you have given us great delight. I see St. Paul before me, hear the tones of his voice, the magic of his burning words—for if his speech was contemptible, his

utterances were powerful. Your privilege in being his disciple—and a beloved disciple——”

Here the vision faded. Our trance was rudely broken by an earthly voice.

“Wake up!” cried H. C. “You studied the West Front so long that it mesmerised you. I saw your eyes close: you fell asleep.”

Our eyes opened at this abrupt summons, and we came at a leap from the first to the nineteenth century. We were leaning against the obelisk in the middle of the square. The place was deserted.

“But where is Trophimus?” we cried. “He came down from his niche and offered us St. Paul’s Epistle to the Corinthians. We were having a delightful time with him. You have done us a cruel turn in banishing the vision.”

“Trophimus hasn’t moved from his niche,” cried H. C., laughing. “We were talking about him and St. Paul before you fell asleep, and this accounts for your dream. It was no vision at all.”

We chose to have our own idea upon the point, and so strong and lasting was the impression that to this day we firmly believe Trophimus came down and held converse with us in spiritual form. But for H. C.’s barbarous interruption, who knows that St. Paul would not have joined him?

Arles, we say, we had learned by heart: had spent hours in her most rare and interesting museum. The pathetic little woman with her sturdy husband, guardians of these treasures, had paid us quiet attentions, pointing out hidden objects of Greek and Roman art which escape the ordinary visitor; had beguiled us into buying their collection of photographs; had pointed out the photograph of their daughter, one of the beauties of Arles, taken in full costume: a charming and perfect Roman type of face. We knew every pillar standing in the Theatre, had grown familiar with the wonderful passages that led like cloisters round the Amphitheatre, and had looked many a time from the watch-towers upon the distant view. There was nothing worthy of note to be found in Arles that we had not seen.

“Let us work while the sun shines,” quoth H. C. “That

day's drive to Mont Major and Les Baux must be wonderful. We must make our hay whilst these blue skies smile upon us."

We drew lots, and the lot fell upon Mont Major and Les Baux, and after an early breakfast one morning we started on our expedition. Madame, with all her faults, had found us a decent carriage, horse and driver. The horse was strong, the driver looked well fed. They did not belong to madame.

It was a brilliant morning, warm as midsummer. The town was soon left behind, and the country was interesting. Mont Major crowning its heights confronted us the whole way. We are in fair Provence: in the neighbourhood of the Bouches du Rhône. Afar off the splendid river runs its course. It is approaching the sea and seems to hurry on its way as it nears the end of life. In the far distance the Alpine chains rear their heads. In its season the country round about is excessively fertile; vineyards abound. Soon we drew up at the feet of the famous old abbey of Mont Major, now more or less a vast ruin, on the summit of a rock. First founded in the sixth century, it was rebuilt in the eleventh. Sufficient remains to show the enormous size of the abbey as it once stood there, its monks possessing vast wealth and power. All has passed away, giving place to a gigantic ruin that is seen for miles around.

What remains of the abbey is singularly interesting. As we entered the silent and deserted enclosure a woman advanced towards us with the keys. She was guardian of the place, and spoke a strange patois. We traversed the great courtyard, overgrown with weeds, ruined walls, enormously high and broad, all about us. It was difficult to understand the woman's language as she glided about like a ghost, rattling her keys, throwing open doors, and passing like a shadow through apertures scarcely wider than crevices.

The first abbey, she declared in her quaint Provençale, was built in 540 by Childebert. It was of the long extinct order *des Cassianites*, and the great church was dedicated to St. Peter. Like the order itself most of this early monastery had disappeared. All the immense ruin we saw about us belonged to the Benedictine abbey founded, not by Charlemagne, but in 918, by Mouriques the first abbot. In 976 the whole vast area of

the surrounding marshes was given to the abbey by the famous Juge Lambert and his devout wife Walburge. The abbey became powerful; the Benedictines were lords of the soil, and none dared oppose them, whether their acts were good or ill, just or unjust.

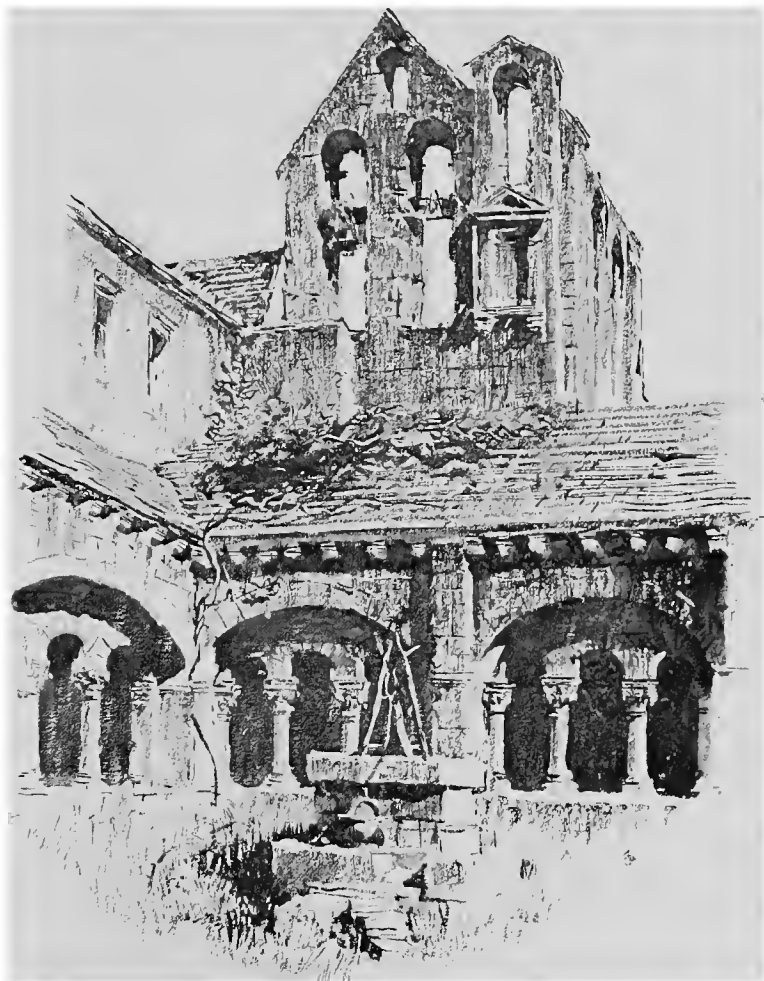
As time went on, however, it worked its changes. The monks grew careless or indolent; gradually the buildings fell into semi-ruin. Century after century rolled away and a certain decadence crept into the order, and grew and strengthened; a parasite, requiring a strong ruling power to arise and expel it. At last, in dire extremity, about the year 1700, they suddenly awoke from their lethargy. Money was gathered together, the whole monastery must be reconstructed on a scale more magnificent than ever; they would awe and conquer by their splendour.

The first stone was laid on Easter Monday 1703. For years the work went on. What was accomplished may be judged by the existing ruins. But it was all lost labour. The new monastery was not destined to flourish. In 1786 came the order for secularising all religious bodies, and in 1793 the work of destruction was completed.

Yet much remains to delight the visitor. Mont Major is surely one of the grandest ecclesiastical ruins in the world. Rising upon a vast rock, its outlines against the clear sky resemble some dead city of the past. You wander about lost in a dream of the years gone by. The very atmosphere of the middle and yet earlier ages surrounds you. From the magnificent square tower built in 1369 by Pons de Ulmo, then abbot, one gazes out upon a vast territory reclaimed from the sea. Two thousand years ago the waves broke at the foot of these crags: but the waters receded, and the marsh-lands were given to the monastery. In time this became, and has remained, a fair and productive land of corn and wine. But no monks eat the fruit thereof. The harvest and the vintage have passed into secular hands; and it may be that madame at the Hôtel du Forum fills her wine-cellar and granary with material that once belonged to the holy abbots of Mont Major.

The view is magnificent from this tower. In the distance are the heights of Les Baux, to which we are on our way. On

the other side rises the blue, misty atmosphere surrounding the town of Arles, out of which rise Roman antiquities and other



CLOISTERS OF MONT MAJOR.

monuments. At our feet, grand and colossal, are the wonderful ruins.

We descend and find ourselves in the cloisters, partially

restored by the government. Of course, they are but a shadow of their former selves; but here in this silent desert of tombs, a special interest surrounds them. Most interesting and picturesque was the well in one corner of the cloisters, where possibly the monks quenched their thirst in days of old when the wine vats ran low—if ever that affliction was permitted. Probably they managed things better, those wise abbots, and their wine vaults, like the widow's cruse, never failed.

The church, too, has been restored, and crypt and passages and cells are much as they were. Historically and architecturally interesting was the small subterranean chapel called the Confessional of St. Trophimus; for the saint is said to have lived his last years here in retirement; to have become a hermit in his extreme old age, and to have died and been buried here.

It was a small, beautiful chapel, just large enough for the saint and his devotions; and here again we closed our eyes and almost had another vision and another conference with Trophimus. His influence certainly haunted the chapel. We should have had some interesting disclosures: a record, perhaps, of his last days on earth. But H. C. was on the alert, and no sooner did our eyes close under the mesmeric influence than we felt a grip of the arm and a hard and pitiless voice broke upon the sacred atmosphere of the chapel. There was a trembling in the air; it was the shade of St. Trophimus withdrawing from the baleful influence.

"We have really no time for visions and trances," cried this uncompromising voice, whilst the accompanying grip made the arm black and blue for days afterwards. "Remember what we have to get through before daylight dies. Come away."

There was a distinct sigh in the far corner of the chapel. Trophimus was evidently disposed to be friendly with us; perhaps take us under his special protection, and give us sweet confidences and precious counsel; and the mundane influence of the usually poetical H. C. was bringing it all to nothing. For once physical force was stronger than moral, and we were dragged away against our will.

The whole exterior surroundings were of the most romantic

description, and one might wander about them for hours and days lost in dreams. Not least interesting was the Romanesque Chapel of the Sainte Croix, object of many a pilgrimage. This stood at a little distance from the main building, crowned by a dome which gave it quite an Eastern influence. Outlined against the clear blue, almost Eastern sky, its effect was singularly charming. An inscription erroneously attributes it to Charlemagne, who never came here, but like Elizabeth of England in later days, the great King of France seems to have been ubiquitous. The chapel really dates from 1019, and was built by the Archbishop de Marignane.

"Here travel the pilgrims," said our quaint and curious Provençale guide. "You see the steps are worn with their footprints. They come and pray here, and miracles are performed. People go away with all their sins forgiven—a great weight off their shoulders."

"And do you join the pilgrims and get your load of sins off your shoulders?" asked H. C. mildly.

"It is not necessary," returned the woman. "I dwell under the shadow of the chapel, which is sufficient justification. And, poor woman as I am, I must say there are some of the pilgrims I should not care to come into contact with. Has monsieur ever joined a pilgrimage?"

"We are not of your church, and pilgrimages do not appeal to us," we replied. "'Fais ce que tu dois, advienne que pourra'—that is the best kind of pilgrimage."

"Monsieur is a heretic?" cried the Provençale, raising her hands and eyes. "Oh, le malheur! I will pray every day for monsieur that he may see the error of his ways and be converted."

"Save yourself the trouble, good woman. All roads lead to Rome, and many ways let us hope lead to heaven."

"But only one way leads to Les Baux," chimed in H. C., "and it is time we took it. Even the summer daylight dies—and this is not summer."

But the Provençale flitted on ahead with her light step and shadowy form, and we had to follow as one follows a Will-o'-the-Wisp.

This time she led the way downwards to a long avenue of

small trees. The ground was marshy, but her feet seemed to tread lightly upon it and leave no trace behind. It was worth a slight wetting for the sake of the view of the monastery, which rose above us a gigantic, magnificent pile, with ruined walls overgrown with lichen and studded with wild flowers. As we have said, the whole atmosphere of the place was eminently romantic; full of refinement; refinement of the best kind; an ecclesiastical, monastic influence, carrying one back to the picturesque middle ages, when monks in cowl and cloak trod the quiet cloisters, repeating their *Ave Marias*, and finding an agreeable diversion in fishing.

Life was by no means a burden to these good old monks. If they had occasional fasts and penances and midnight masses, after all one gets used to these things; habit is second nature; the back grows to the burden. They have left behind them the impression of a peaceful atmosphere; of days that are no more; of a world full of such repose as it can never dream of again. So the attraction of these cloisters remains, and no matter where we find them or how often, is ever new and fresh. They are worth many a long day's journey. Each possesses its own distinct atmosphere, and gives out its own unfading impression.

But Mont Major is a mixture of impressions; its influences are manifold, and a passing visit is infinitely too little to devote to it. The spirit and atmosphere of the place cannot be taken in at a glance. From the very first moment the impression made is vivid and lasting; but one feels there is more behind. We left it only with the greater reluctance; but as H. C. had said, returning for a moment to his poetical mood, "the summer daylight dies:" the winter only the sooner: and though the heat to-day was almost tropical and the atmosphere Eastern in its clearness, the month was November.

We said good-bye to the Provençale, whose parting benediction was a reiterated assurance that she would pray for our heresy. As our driver took up the reins and cracked his whip and went off at a gallop dangerous to the shafts, we looked back and saw her standing under the very shadow of the Pilgrim Chapel, her hands shading her eyes as she gazed after the retreating cavalcade in the sunshine. After all, there was good

in the woman, according to her lights ; she was one who loved her fellow-men, and her sorrow and concern for the heretic were very sincere.

It was a day made for the occasion : one of those special days that stand out in a life-time, and make one dream of heaven, and bring one quite near to it. The country through which we drove was beautiful even at this season of the year. As we approached Les Baux, it grew more rocky, and the wild and barren rocks took curious fantastic forms. On nearing Les Baux, a dog ran after us for all the world like a wolf—a *wehr-wolf* : the most uncanny animal we had ever seen. It ran swift as an arrow, silent as a shadow. As it ran it showed its teeth and grinned satanically. The horse started and was frightened ; the driver cracked his whip at the creature—it only showed its teeth the more defiantly and ran the quicker. Was the animal indeed fiendish ? The driver turned towards us and shrugged his shoulders ; he looked pale. “J’ n’aime pas ces bêtes là, voyez vous, m’sieu,” he said. “On les comprends pas, dans not’ pays ; pas bien sur si c’est bête ou diable. Argardez mon ch’val, m’sieu !”

Truly the luckless animal was trembling, evidently with fear ; and if we could have seen its eye, no doubt it was glaring.

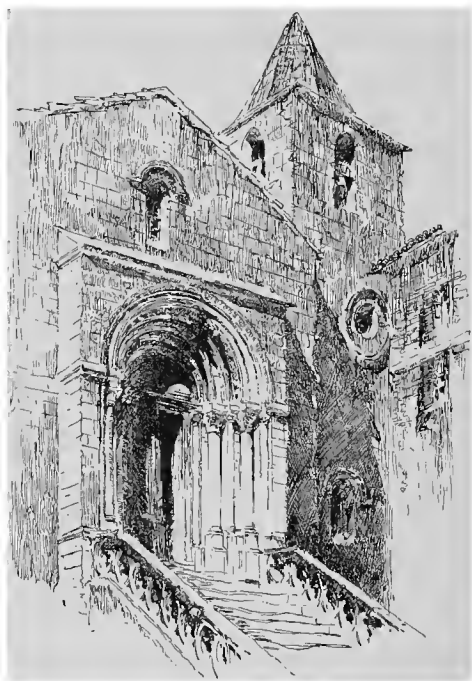
Then the wehr-wolf gave a final dart, we heard its teeth snap as it turned tail and flew back swiftly as it had come.

Les Baux was before us, more wonderful and more singular than Mont Major itself. The driver with a sharp turn to the right began a steep ascent. The whole scene was marvellous. Rugged rocks, sharp, towering and fantastic, surrounded us. This was the approach to the ancient Ville des Baux. In the days of its glory it was practically impregnable ; no earthly power could take it. As we went higher and higher up the strange and tortuous road, our wonder grew.

At length we reached the confines of the town. It is now a mass of ruins, with the exception of sundry habitations used by the few who live in this out-of-the-world spot. Rocks and ruins are all of the same tone and colour ; they seem to have grown to each other, and it is difficult to define them. Here and there the narrow streets remain, showing what existed

in the days gone by. But they are silent and deserted. Not a cat prowls about the precincts. Very far off are the days of its glory.

There is a legend to the effect that the first owners of Les Baux were descended from one of the Magi who, guided by the star, came from the East to Bethlehem to worship the infant Saviour.



CHURCH OF ST. VINCENT, LES BAUX.

This probably is mythological. It appears more certain that the founders of Les Baux were descended from the powerful Visigoths who settled in Arles about the year 480. This, however, is also traditional.

The first historical records date from the ninth century. From that time to the end of the fifteenth century the long line of descendants may be traced. In 1481, the Barony of Baux, until then a small kingdom or-principality of its own, was

united to the crown of France by the death of Charles III. The county of Provence shared the same fate at the same time. The impregnable fortress was demolished by order of Louis XI., who was then King of France, but nearing his end. After this Les Baux was ruled by governors and barons appointed by the crown. In 1643 Louis XIII. gave it to the Grimaldis, in whose possession it remained until 1795. Then these princes of Monaco were compelled to return the territory to France, receiving an equivalent in the form of a large sum of money.

Nearing the summit of the rock on which the ruins are perched, the scene grew ever more strange and startling. Here high up above the world, on a vast and solitary crag, once stood the town for which the last Baron des Baux broke his heart when Louis XIII. took it from him and gave it to his favourite, Hercules II. Prince of Monaco. Here in turn ruled with a lordly rod of iron the proud and powerful Grimaldis, who would periodically leave their princely territory on the shores of the Mediterranean and with great pomp and retinue journey to this rocky fastness, where they lived in regal splendour.

Once the Mediterranean had washed the base of these rocks also, and Les Baux was an island at high tide. You might sit far up above the world and gaze upon the matchless blue waters, the restless plashing waves that broke far down. The sirens would float up from Capri and try to lure men to their distant caverns; and some would listen to the song, and in their intoxication plunge from the vast heights into the depths of the blue sea, to be lost for ever.

But in the days of the Grimaldis all this had passed away. The sea was no more. What they had gazed upon then we gazed upon now, as far as onward prospect was concerned. There through the flowery plain the Rhône, broad and splendid, took its rapid course, all the blue of the sky reposing on its surface. Very far off we caught sight of the shimmering sea, a broad band of light on the horizon. We almost shuddered as we looked over the precipitous sides of the rock into the depths below, where men walking looked as bees, and the cottages sprinkled about might have been their hives.

It was around us that the scene had changed; upon and

within the rock, not without. Where the Grimaldis had reigned in pomp and splendour, behold now ruin and devastation. Where great palaces had reared their proud heads, behold now dark holes and desolated chambers, a refuge for the eagles and the owls. Even as we looked, a huge eagle-owl rose suddenly from an unseen corner, spread its wings and took its mighty flight towards the sun.

It was the strangest scene we had ever witnessed. Throughout our visit we felt in a dream; everything seemed unreal and unsubstantial. When it was all over we wondered if we had really gone through the experiences or imagined it. But that vast, solitary rock, those ruined streets and palaces were no fabric of a vision.

On first arriving, we were accosted by the inevitable guide. This time it was not a shadowy female who flitted through the keyholes, landed us in treacherous morasses, and spoke in an unknown tongue, but a lord of creation who attached himself to our service, whether we would or not. He also prided himself upon his French, which certainly was not Provençale, but pure and flowery Parisian. It was a lasting mystery to us how he had acquired his fine flow of language, a really fine style of oratory. For when, later on, he had occasion to write to us, his letters by no means equalled his parts of speech. Suffice it to say that he was an admirable and intelligent guide, with the whole history of Les Baux, antiquity, geology, botany, at his fingers' ends. It was not a merely superficial knowledge, and added much to our visit. He appeared to know the history of every stone in the place and seemed devoted to his surroundings.

We went up the narrow street, one of the few parts of Les Baux with tenantable human habitations. He knew the history of every ruined tenement, and to not a few was attached many a romantic tale.

As we turned and looked about, a strange apparition came slowly creeping up the steep incline. What was it? Bird, beast, or demon? Human or the contrary? The lower part seemed certainly human; walked on two legs. The upper was a shapeless mass throwing out a thousand feelers; a land octopus seeking prey.

As it drew nearer the mystery was solved. Like troubles that we dread but that never come; like noises in haunted houses that, investigated, turn to smoke; so our gigantic horror proved nothing but a harmless woman with her head lost in an enormous load of fagot-branches. This had made her at least twelve feet high, and as she walked the branches swayed up and down and cruelly clutched the air.

Just beyond this we found the small ancient church of St. Vincent; a perfect Romanesque gem that has well survived the centuries. Here was the great necropolis of the place, and in the vast crypt below repose the countless bones of those who for a season strutted the world's stage. High and low, rich and poor, Barons des Baux and proud Grimaldis, there they alike in trembling hope repose. Death has levelled them all; and in these vaulted corridors reigns the veritable silence of death.

The interior of the church was interesting, even to the chapel of the "White Penitents"—which made one think of Jane Shore and her white sheet—for there is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous. In days gone by a priory was attached to the church, and no doubt the worthy priors tried to have it all their own way. They do not appear to have succeeded, but rather were in wholesome subjugation to the secular power that ruled.

From the extreme height of the rock to which our guide conducted us, one sentence kept beating upon the brain: "All the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." The wide horizon seemed to embrace a universe. Here it is true, the glory had departed. It was amazing to gaze upon this vast extent of ruin; houses without roofs, only the bare walls standing, part and parcel of the rock, as it seemed, on which they stood; all toned to the one grey colour.

"Here I pass a solitary life," said our guide. "I am nearly always alone, always at work, always studying. Many discoveries are due to me; I have classified and arranged much. I alone understand this place, possess the true key to it; I alone love it as a man loves his home and household gods. Therefore I am never lonely. In the midst of this solitude I feel that the ruins are my silent companions. The eagles and the owls are my friends. I put my hand into their holes and

bring out their young. Sometimes the fancy seizes me to carry one away, and bring him up, and tame and civilise him. I have a young eagle-owl now in my house; a rare bird indeed, who knows me, watches for me, lets me fondle him. Imagine making a pet of a king owl. I call him Grimaldi, after the princes of Monaco, who ruled here until a century ago there came the lawless reign of terror and the Grimaldis disappeared. Their sole representative now is a young owl. Monsieur shall see him, and if he would like to have him he is welcome to him. No one else on earth possesses an eagle taken from the heights of Les Baux. I doubt if, in this century at least, any one else has captured one—or would dare the deed. But I am in sympathy with the splendid birds, and they seem to know it. I have called to a grown eagle-owl and he has come to me, and because I have shown no fear he has shown no desire to pluck out my eyes, but has made friends in his way. Would monsieur like to go up to an owl's nest? Remember the eagle-owls are the present kings of Les Baux."

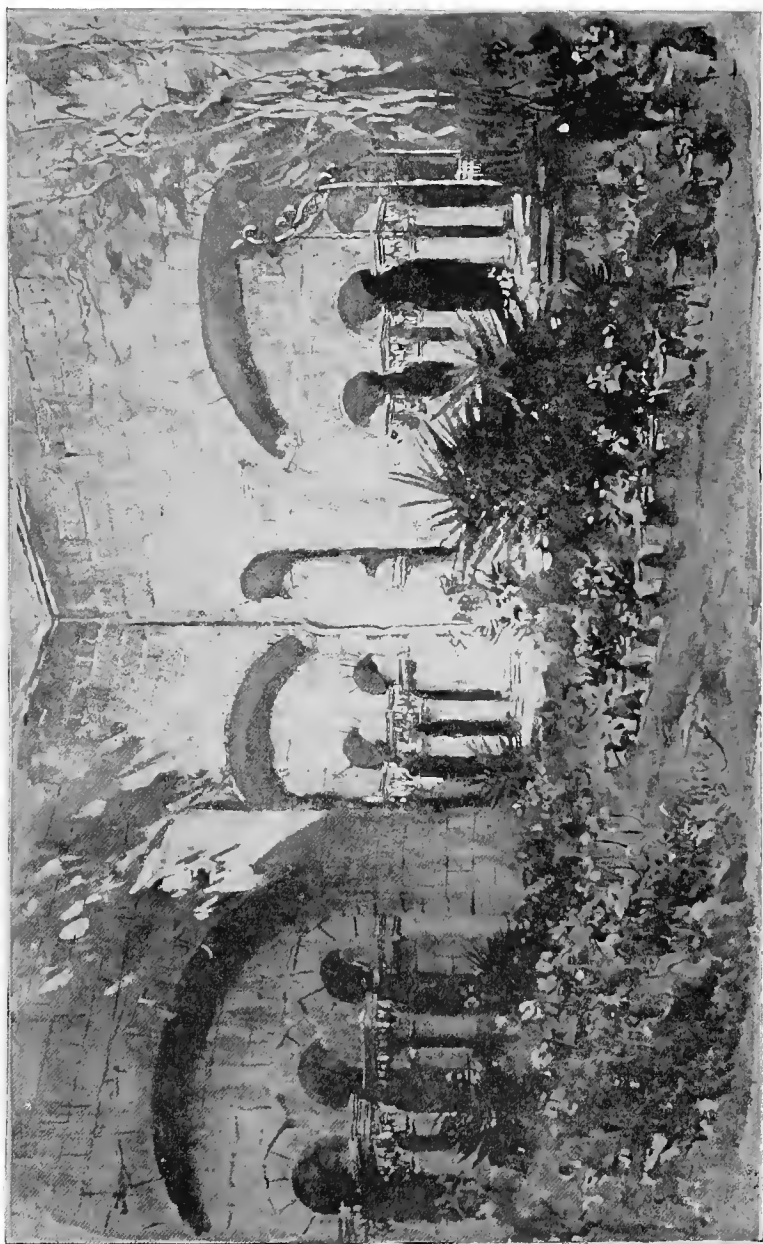
We declared our readiness to attend the court of this strange monarch, and through a labyrinth of quiet unknown ways the guide led us to a nest on a ledge of rock overhanging the precipice. One solitary owl, truly a king of birds, occupied it. As we approached he roused himself and became alert. Then with a cry of defiance he took wing and like his mate we had lately seen, soared away towards the land of the sun. We watched him until he became a speck in the ether.

"Has he gone for good? Will he ever reach the sun?" we asked.

The guide laughed.

"If life were long enough, the wings were strong enough," he said. "But he will not go so far. Where he goes to I do not know, but towards sunset I shall see two far-off specks gradually approaching. They will be my eagles returning home. Had I been alone to-day, he would not have flown at my approach, but rather would have come at my call. I often bring them food, and I am very quiet with them—two great secrets in taming the wild creatures of creation."

We made our way back through all the ruined wonders of Les Baux; streets cut out of the solid rock, that time can never



CLOISTERS, NEAR ST. RÉMY.—Page 241.



change; palaces and houses that also were built for the ages and that were demolished no one knows how. Arrived at his little house, he politely bade us enter, and took us to a lower room where lived the captive owl. At the first moment we were startled. The bird, now full grown, had perched on a stone. His eyes, looking large as saucers, were wide open. Never had we seen eyes so piercing, so magnificent, so electrifying. The semi-obscurity in which he dwelt only added to his splendours. Our guide went up to him, spoke to him and stroked him; but the bird, permitting his caress, was uneasy. He turned his startled gaze full upon us, and looked ready to sweep down and take vengeance. Then for a moment he turned his wise head and eyes upon his master. They plainly asked a question.

"Who are these that dare intrude upon my ancient solitary reign?"

"These gentlemen are friends, Grim," replied the guide. "Remember that noblesse oblige, and as a king you must hold out the sceptre of peace."

Grim pondered awhile, gazed at one and the other, subdued his ruffled feathers, and finally offered his claw to his master. It was distinctly a truce. The guide was delighted.

"He is friendly disposed towards you already, monsieur," he cried. "I have brought few people to see him, it is true, but never has he done this before. There is a magnetic power about monsieur. The birds know it."

We pleaded not guilty to anything strange or uncanny about us. Tried as the wizard, we should certainly sink to the bottom.

"Monsieur should accept the bird," said the guide. "He is a splendid creature and worth having. For my own part, I find his keep more than I can afford. Few people visit Les Baux and these are hard times. Monsieur would really be conferring a favour upon me and a happiness upon Grim by accepting him. I know that his lines would fall in pleasant places."

But it was a startling proposal, a serious undertaking, and required reflection. Our guide narrowly watched the process of consideration. The owl, too, held his head on one side and seemed to put on a doubtful air. "There are two sides to a

question," it said, "and it takes two to make a bargain. I might not like England and the English. Judging by the specimen before me——"

Whether the rest of the sentence would have been flattering or the reverse was never known: the guide in taking a step slipped, and just saved himself from falling. But the abrupt action startled the bird; up went the feathers, and a hissing sound came from the beak. In a moment or two he calmed down but did not again take up the thread of his discourse.

We promised the guide to think seriously of the matter and send him our decision. With this he professed himself satisfied.

"If monsieur hesitates he is lost," he said. "I know he will accept Grim."

At any rate, for the moment we bade Grim farewell. The bird, unlike Poe's raven, made us a distinct obeisance: there are coincidences in life and this was one of them. He half raised his claw, and then, thinking better of it, put it down again. Too much familiarity breeds contempt—he was evidently acquainted with the proverb, and like a wise bird felt that proverbs are rules for living contained in a nutshell.

Next we said good-bye to our intelligent and honest guide: quite an admirable Crichton amongst guides: and left all the charm and all the sunshine, and all the strange, dreamlike influence of Les Baux behind us. We had not absorbed a tenth part of this strange influence and atmosphere; we still felt outside it all: and yet the impression made by that short visit was deep and lasting. We had been in Wonderland: a silent land of ruins, from which all life and energy had departed. This existed only in the guide and the owls.

To anticipate a moment. We long and seriously thought over the matter of Grim, and at length in a weak moment decided to accept him. Those glowing saucer eyes seemed to hold one in spell, even after days and weeks of absence. It was only on our return to England that we wrote over for the despatching of Grim.

Thus it came to pass that Mr. Grim travelled over alone, as a first-class passenger of distinction and consideration from



A NOOK IN THE LOWER VALLEY.



Arles to London. He arrived one Sunday in the hands of a porter, who had travelled up with the bird all the way from London Bridge with the precious charge. Grim was first of all interviewed by the butler and housekeeper who in solemn conclave shook their heads and declared it to be "another of master's queer fancies, and what in the world would be the next thing? An American gorilla, perhaps." It was Grim himself who afterwards repeated this conversation to us.

We were just starting for the Temple Church (will Dr. Vaughan ever be forgotten by those who listened to him year after year?) when there came a summons from the solemn and protesting servitor.

"A wild beast from foreign parts, sir. Labelled dangerous. Porter from London Bridge came up at the risk of his life. Wife and nine children dependent upon him. Mrs. Bacon all of a tremble. Saving your presence, I do think, sir——"

"Where is it, Wharton?"

"In the housekeeper's room, sir: porter standing outside the room, thankful to get rid of his charge."

"Lead the way, Wharton. We are all impatience."

This was done. "Glad I'm still alive, sir," said the porter, as we appeared on the scene; a stalwart man six feet four and stout in proportion: but it is proverbial that the stoutest hearts beat in small frames.

On the table in the housekeeper's room was a large box with a grating on one side. This was Grim's first-class carriage. No one dared approach it. We knocked the top off. Out hopped Grim, with a wild scream of delight. Then with a rush of recognition he spread his great wings, took flight and perched on our head. Time and sorrow have thinned our locks, and the situation was distinctly unpleasant. We moved Grim to our shoulder. Another scream of delight and a friendly peck which only left an impression. The housekeeper swooned; Wharton gave a month's notice on the spot: the porter whose one eye was round the door cried "Suicide under temporary insanity, to which I'm a witness."

Just as he was, we marched with Grim up to an upper chamber prepared for him, and gently took him off our shoulder. His eyes were closed. "I'm dead beat," he said. "Hardly have

I slept a moment since I left Les Baux. It has been a cruel journey. You—will—be—a—good—master——”

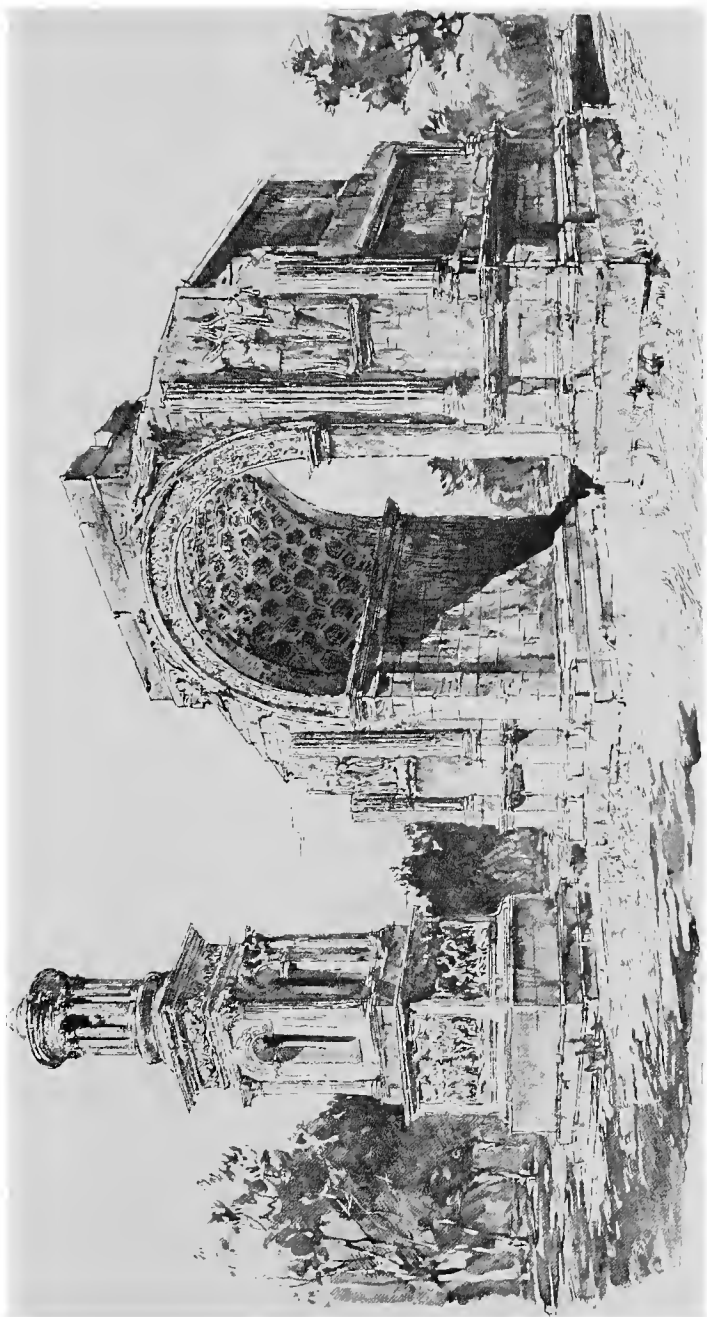
Here the eyes closed again. Grim was very fast asleep.

The porter was propitiated; the housekeeper condoled with; the butler's warning ignored. By luncheon that day the usual harmony reigned, and Wharton's silver was, if possible, brighter than ever. How tactful and pleasant, these little silent apologies! But as the days went on, it was found to be cruelty to keep Grim in a shut-up room. Moreover the housekeeper declared her books would be doubled if she had to supply that bird from foreign parts with rats and mice *ad libitum*, and dainty larks for dessert. So it ended in a compromise. Grim was lent to the Zoo “until further orders.” There he may still be seen, happy in the company of his fellows—but, he declares, not his equals.

When the gaoler arrived from the Zoo with a sack to catch him in, and a basket to put the sack into, Grim knew something was up. He put his head first on one side and then on the other; and when the gaoler put him into the basket, before the lid was shut down he gave us the most imploring, appealing look of wounded affection that ever came from eyes of owl. We could stand it no longer, but left the room and would not look upon the departure. That look haunted us for many and many a long day. It was almost human, stronger than words. But one day Grim is to come back to us, to where the sea sounds in the distance, and owls call at night and rich hills and valleys make glad the heart of man—and then we will make it up to him.

To return. We left Les Baux with even more reluctance than we had left Mont Major. It was more difficult to grasp; the influence was more weird; the whole place utterly unique and exceptional. Our guide, too, had added very much to the interest of the visit, and we had made a new friend in Grim. But again—the summer daylight dies, and our morning was growing apace. We were bound for St. Rémy, and our road passed through a very fertile valley.

Within about a mile of the little town we suddenly came upon two of the most beautiful Roman monuments the world



TOMB AND TRIUMPHAL ARCH, NEAR ST. REMY.



contains: a triumphal arch and a tomb. Their solitary appearance by the roadside, opposed to all their surroundings, was singular in the extreme. Here is said to have once existed the town of *Glanum Livii*, and these are its last relics. The tomb is said to be that of the Julii. It is pyramidal in form: a square base, an arrangement of porticos with fluted half-columns in the centre: and a small round temple with fluted Corinthian columns crowning the whole. Never had we seen lovelier, more graceful and refined monuments. These alone would have repaid a long day's drive.

Opposite to them, not very far from the road, we came upon another unexpected and unknown treasure: a building that once had been a monastery, but had now, become as far as we could make out, a hospital for lunatics. The place was not open to the public, but they very kindly admitted us. A long, well-kept avenue led up to the building, in the centre of which was an interesting church and the most exquisite and perfect Gothic cloisters. We had heard nothing about them and stood amazed. Their existence is unknown, unrecorded; we found them out by chance, and great was our delight. Behind all was an immense, well-kept garden. The whole place indeed possessed a singular charm, and we continued our way to St. Rémy, feeling we had crowned our day.

## CHAPTER IX.

St. Rémy—The pottery dealer—H. C.'s purchase—A new idea—Compromise—Nostradamus—Madame's view of the matter—Graceful acting—Mademoiselle Charlotte—"You are welcome"—Babette—H. C. to the rescue—Mademoiselle aghast—Babette's penance—H. C. recovers—Quaint fourteenth-century building—Mademoiselle Charlotte does the honours—"Il ne manquerait plus que ça!"—The gold embroiderer—"Cleverest man in France"—Content to be unknown—"Blighted life"—Fine dining-room—Generous hostess—Superb wine—"Let us *trinquer*, monsieur"—Regretful leave-taking—Hotel garden—Madame holds to her opinion—Returning—Marvellous church—Oasis in a desert—Madame advises—St. Gilles—West front of cathedral—Architectural dream—A world's wonder—Primitive déjeuner—Excessive charge—"You must pay for the decorations"—Picturesque nook—White-haired old priest—His human sympathies—"Il faut se suffire"—Attentive housekeeper—"We cannot have all the virtues"—Sisters of Mercy—West front glorified—Banks of the canal—Interesting couple—Invitation to luncheon—Soupe à l'oseille—"We have few troubles"—Back in Arles—Madame enthusiastic—Under the stars.

WE found the little town of St. Rémy quaint and interesting. The church, it is true, could not boast of striking architectural features; there were no long-drawn aisles and fretted vaults; no Norman doorway or Gothic cloister to enchant one; but the exterior had a human attraction in the form of a stout Provençale who sold artistic pottery that was certainly tempting. This was spread in the open thoroughfare, under the very shadow of the sacred building. Every article, from water-coolers to the inevitable pot-au-feu, was to be purchased. The prices were ridiculously small. Going into the church for a few minutes, on coming out again we found H. C. had lavishly bought a dozen examples of every specimen. The woman was elated, he flushed and excited with what he called his "discoveries." Nothing under a travelling caravan would have conveyed the collection to British shores.

"How are you going to dispose of them?" we asked. "Pickford's vans are not available at St. Rémy, and if you telegraphed to the Pantechnicon, even Mr. Rudermacher would hardly be equal to the occasion."

H. C. seemed to awaken out of a dream: looked a little bewildered.

"I forgot that," he said. "Forgot where I was. Forgot these would have to sail over the sea—like Lord Bateman and the fair Sophia. We must get a dozen large packing cases made, and dispose of them in that way."

"And dispose of a small fortune at the same time. The game is not worth the candle."

"They might travel over with the owl," suggested H. C. "The two together would form quite a fine collection. Animate and inanimate specimens of *le pays d'Arles*, or in other words, Provence. We could lay the foundation of a fine museum: should get knighted and made F.R.S.—perhaps K.G. Who knows?"

In the end we had to compromise the matter by giving the woman a couple of francs to take back her wares: explaining that H. C. was a great poet, and that great poets were not always responsible for their actions.

"Eccentric, perhaps," she said, looking critically at her late wholesale customer: "and dealing in magic like Nostradamus. Monsieur has seen the house of Nostradamus? It is the one curiosity of St. Rémy."

We had done so, after infinite pains and perseverance: having been sent from pillar to post, from Peter to Paul, in search of the said sorcerer's house. At last we concluded the sorcery was still going on. Every one had a different idea as to the true house inhabited by Nostradamus. One man went so far as to direct us two miles out of the town—a pilgrimage declined with thanks. A group of men of whom we asked the information were so divided upon the point that they gradually waxed wrathful, and we left them in a hot dispute that might have been heard from one end of the place to the other. Nostradamus was still bewitching the people.

Madame at the hotel had her own view of the matter. It was a well-kept inn, and compared with that of Arles was

luxury itself. Attached to it was a large garden, where flowers bloomed and trees threw their shade. Madame was a bright, dark-eyed, well-featured little woman, well-dressed from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot.

"The house of Nostradamus?" she said in answer to the usual question. "Why, of course I know it. I will direct you, for you must see it. You go down past the green. You take the first turning to the right, the second to the left, the third to the right again and the fourth to the left—and there you are. No possibility of missing your way. A child could find it. After that fourth to the left you will see a narrow *ruelle*. Ask for the house of Mademoiselle Charlotte. Seek Mademoiselle herself—a most amiable person—tout à fait la grande dame. *That* is the house of Nostradamus. My compliments and I shall esteem it a personal favour if she will show you over it. A most ancient and curious house. I believe Nostradamus still haunts it. Whenever I first place foot in it, I shudder."

And madame put on quite a graceful little fit of shivering, and turned quite pale and interesting, so that her dark eyes sparkled and looked like twin stars under their long lashes. We followed these very simple directions (not without differing from H. C. as to rights and lefts and thirds and fourths) and duly found ourselves in the *ruelle* so graphically described.

The house of Mademoiselle Charlotte was soon pointed out, and Mademoiselle Charlotte herself appeared: a very different person from madame: tall and stately and slow speaking; une grande dame, as madame had said, measuring her sentences with a due regard to rhythm and effect. She had once been strikingly good-looking, with a majestic kind of beauty, and was still stately and comely and well-preserved. It struck us that she might almost have been Werner's love, only that one could never imagine this stately figure cutting bread and butter. Evidently Mademoiselle Charlotte was the leader and oracle of her immediate surroundings.

"My house the house of Nostradamus the Sorcerer—for I maintain that he *was* a sorcerer," cried mademoiselle in horror. And then: "Que cette chère dame est ridicule!" she laughed. "She has a mania, and will persist in this idea, and nothing that I can say will convince her to the contrary. She pretends

that she *frissonnes* as soon as she enters, and once declared that she saw the ghost of Nostradamus disappear up the chimney on a broomstick. In vain I told her that a dignified man like Nostradamus would never rush through the air on a broomstick, like a common witch. She was not to be convinced. That energy of mind which has brought her to the first hotel in the place—une belle position, monsieur—manifests itself in the tenacity of her opinions.”

Here Mademoiselle Charlotte paused to take breath, for her deliberate speaking took time. We hastened to get in a word.

“Nevertheless your house, whether that of Nostradamus or not, is undoubtedly interesting, mademoiselle; quaint and ancient, and worthy of careful examination.”

“Oh, as to that, it is old enough,” said mademoiselle—“as I find to my cost,” she added laughing, “for now a door comes off its hinges, and now a casement gives way, and now a wainscoting falls down, and now a foot goes through a rotten stair. The latter is a most uncomfortable sensation. You feel as if you were going down into the bowels of the earth, or as if Mephistopheles were running off with you as he ran off with that wicked Faust. Served him right, I always say. Du reste, messieurs, you are welcome to inspect the house. Vous êtes les bien-venus. Pray come in, and I will have the pleasure of doing the honours.”

At this moment an agonised shriek went through the house, startling the ancient echoes.

“What is it now?” cried Mademoiselle Charlotte in affright. “What is the matter now, Babette?”

“Another rotten stair has given way, mademoiselle,” shrieked a terrified voice. “This time my whole leg is engulfed, and I cannot extricate it. A—h! a rat is nibbling at my shoe! I shall die of horror! A—h! O—h! Au secours!” The screams augmented.

“Let me hasten!” cried H. C., ever ready to rescue distressed damsels. And he brushed past us and rapidly disappeared in the direction of the sounds.

“That Babette will be the death of me yet,” said mademoiselle as we proceeded more leisurely towards the

scene of action. "She goes about in seven-leagued boots that would have done for the giants in the fairy tales. She rushes through the house like a whirlwind: thinks nothing of tumbling down a whole flight and shrieking that every bone in her body is broken, when she is hardly even bruised. Now her head goes flying through a casement, and it takes a whole day to repair the damage—not to the head, which somehow always escapes, but to the casement; and now, as you have heard, her whole leg goes flying through a stair unable to bear the weight of her seven-leagued strides. And yet I don't know what it is, I cannot send Babette away."

We had now reached the catastrophe, and came upon quite a tableau-vivant. The rescue had been accomplished, the leg released. H. C. was sitting upon a stair with a very pretty girl; a charming face and sylph-like figure. Her trembling hands were tightly clasped round his arm, as she implored him with hysterical breathings not to let her fall back into the hole. We noticed that his own grasp tightened—quite unnecessarily, we thought. His face was flushed, and he tried to calm the distressed damsel as one would soothe a frightened infant. Mademoiselle stood aghast, rooted to the spot; scandalised; in a mute amazement. At length her voice came back to her, but it was hollow and shook as she cried sarcastically:

"Very pretty indeed! Quite an act in a drama. No! Ne vous donnez pas la peine, monsieur," to H. C. "Babette, I am ashamed of you. Your father-confessor shall hear of this, and you shall do penance through the town in a white sheet, and fast for six months. Unclasp those hands, insolente! and get you to your room."

But the grasp only tightened as Babette hysterically murmured: "Oh! save me from that dreadful hole!"

When the rescue was at last effected, and Babette flew down to the kitchen with surprising agility in one who a moment ago was so near swooning, H. C. emerged from the field of battle with disordered hair and flushed face. But Mademoiselle Charlotte was wise, and now that the offending Babette had disappeared, laughingly passed off the incident and turned from the modern to the antiquarian interests of her house.

H. C. recovered his balance by magic, and even his hair got

back to its ordinary condition. It was all extremely captivating.

A fourteenth-century building, most quaint and curious; full of unexpected nooks and corners; of various short and separate staircases; of panelled rooms, singular in shape; of oaken ceilings with divisions that would have done for the quarterings of some ancient House; of wonderful casements that, back and front, projected beyond the walls with their beautiful leaded panes. Everywhere we came upon rich carvings with quaint devices: grotesques that grinned side by side with angels' heads supported by outspread wings.

Mademoiselle Charlotte did the honours of the inspection regally.

"Yes, it is no doubt charming," she assented—"from an antiquarian point of view. But it has its drawbacks as a dwelling-place. Yet it is my own, and I love it. It was my father's before me, and my grandfather's and great-grandfather's, to the six and seventh generation—for three hundred years in fact. Babette," cried Mademoiselle Charlotte down the staircase, "if you have sufficiently recovered from your hysterics, place my best vin de Provence on the table. It comes from my own vineyard, messieurs, and my own hands helped to make it," she laughed, "for I gave one screw to the press. And though I say it, better wine you will not find in the country or out of it. My vineyard has a reputation hors concours. I perceive," she added sympathetically, "that your friend will be the better for a glass of wine. He is agitated."

In effect, now the reaction was over, H. C. was a little pale and nervous.

"I think," he murmured, in a voice that would have done honour to Uriah Heep, casting his eyes upon the ground, "whilst you finish the inspection, I should like to go and sit down, and rest in the room where the wine is to be placed."

But the ruse was too palpable; he was circumvented by Mademoiselle Charlotte, and Babette was saved the necessity of another paroxysm.

"Il ne manqueroit plus que ça!" laughed Mademoiselle. "Ah! les entrainements de la jeunesse!—et la sagesse de l'âge mûr!" After which philosophical remark, she continued the inspection.

The small courtyard at the back—about two yards square—was wonderfully picturesque, for here the latticed casements were prominent and overhanging. There were back staircases that Babette's seven-leagued boots would certainly have brought to rapid destruction. But here there seemed to be separate houses and households. Every floor was a different *ménage*. In one of them an old man worked at some wonderfully artistic gold embroidery, which he was doing for a church in Paris. His skilful hands wrought in the most delicate and intricate manner.

"I began when I was twelve," he said, "and am now over seventy, and I have done nothing else all my life. I ought to be fairly clever by this time."

"In effect he is the cleverest man in France," said Mademoiselle Charlotte. "He is a miracle, for he sees now without glasses as well as when he was twenty years old; and runs up and down stairs with the agility of a cat."

"You ought to be rich and famous after all these years of industry," we remarked.

The old man laughed. "I don't know," he replied. "I have never sought fame particularly, and was never sparing at the sack's mouth. To entertain my friends has been one of my life-pleasures, and I could never resist the appeals of sorrow and misery. All the same, I have a warm stocking in the chimney-corner, and have no need to work. But what would life be without an object, even at my age? Worse than a blank. If I were to make a catalogue of all the work I have done for all the churches—including rich vestments for the Archbishop of Paris—it would make quite a small library of volumes. But I am not always amongst the churches and the archbishops. I have embroidered robes for queens and trains for duchesses, and often enough—you would hardly believe it—they have visited me here in my humble little room and sat down and talked to me as if they were quite at home and I one of themselves."

"Why not?" cried Mademoiselle Charlotte. "You are a veritable genius, and genius is above distinctions of rank and class."

"That's all very well if you come to Literature, or Painting,

or Music," returned the old man; "but a gold embroiderer, be he never so clever, will only rank as a working man. And that is what I am, and all I aspire to be. I am quite content that the Archbishop of Paris or the Pope of Rome should look resplendent in chasubles wrought with these hands—and that the worker should remain unknown."

"So you always say," cried Mademoiselle Charlotte, "but I don't believe you. You have both pride and ambition, and these have unconsciously helped you on all through your life. You know that is as true as that I stand here, and your humility is only affected."

"Perhaps you are right, Mademoiselle Charlotte," laughed the old man. "In one way I have been aspiring—to my sorrow. You have blighted my life," putting on a melancholy air. "I must be proud, for I have aspired to your hand. If I have asked you to marry me once, I have asked you a hundred times. You are a hard woman."

"Taisez-vous, you foolish old man, or I will box your ears," cried Mademoiselle Charlotte, laughing in her turn. "It is high time you should be thinking of other things than marrying and giving in marriage. In the first place, if I had meant to marry I should have done so long ago: and secondly, if I had married it would have been some one above me, not below me. But now, after all these antiquarian experiences animate and inanimate"—here she laughed again and looked pointedly at the gold-worker—"let us go into my *salle à manger* and drink a glass of my famous *vin du pays*. If anything can make one young again—or restore agitated nerves, it is that—it is that."

Upon which, leaving the gold-worker to his labours, Mademoiselle Charlotte led the way through gloomy passages and panelled corridors, which all reminded one of bygone centuries.

The dining-room was on the same model as the rest of the house: panelled and sombre, but splendid. The wine was on the table: Babette had disappeared. The dignified hostess, tall, stately and comely, looked in her proper place and worthily fulfilled her position. With a generous hand she poured out streams of her rich red wine. It had not been overrated. Never had we found better. H. C. took up his tumbler—no small, limited wine-glasses would suit mademoiselle's free

nature—and was preparing his best bow and most poetical expression for his hostess, when :

“Let us *trinquer*, monsieur,” she laughed. “It is the right thing amongst friends—for we are friends from to-day. If you do want a toast, I will drink to your success in life—including a discreet marriage.”

H. C. blushed to the roots of his hair, and drained his glass to the dregs ; then, like Oliver, asked for more. That is to say, he looked at the bottom of his tumbler with a most regretful countenance, and ostentatiously put the glass down.

“I told you so,” laughed mademoiselle. “You are already a new man. There comes fire to your eye and colour to your cheek. I could almost fancy that you were a poet. N'est-ce pas vrai ? A second glass, and you will feel within you the strength of Hercules.”

Upon which she rapidly refilled all the glasses, for all were empty.

“You are too generous, mademoiselle. Like the gold-worker, we fear you do not spare at the sack’s mouth. For our own part, you see we have a difficult task to perform. It needs a steady hand and a cool brain to keep in check the exuberances of our poet-friend.”

“I see that,” laughed Mademoiselle Charlotte. “But this wine will do no one any harm. It is sound and wholesome, steadying the nerves, not affecting them. As for sparing at the sack’s mouth, why should I do so ? The supply is abundant. I sell half the yield of the vineyard, and then have much to give away, retaining more than I and my friends can get through. Every year I add to my cellar. This wine that you are drinking has been bottled ten years, and if I sent you over ten dozen to England my cellar would not feel it. Look at your friend now. What has become of the pallid cheek and sunken eyes that rescued that frivolous little fool Babette ?”

And truly H. C., having finished his second tumbler, looked ready to enter the arena and fight with wild beasts. On taking leave, we verily thought he was about to embrace Mademoiselle Charlotte herself. She evidently thought so too, for with the very least addition of pink to her cheeks she took

a step backward. Then turning to us, and offering her hand very frankly and quite in an English manner:

"Your friend is very susceptible and impulsive," she laughed. "It is well that he has you to look after him and keep him in check."

"If you only knew the heart-burnings of his aunt Lady Maria, and the commuted fines that have saved her from positive bankruptcy, you would to some slight extent appreciate the efforts we have had to exercise in favour of our poet."

This was rather a long-winded sentence, rounded after the manner of mademoiselle's full periods. It was pursued in French, interlarded with Provençal idioms, so that H. C., who prided himself upon his rapid progress in the language, was thrown on his beam ends. We took leave of Mademoiselle Charlotte with regret, and with a feeling of good fellowship that traced itself to something deeper than the effects of the wine.

"If ever you come to St. Rémy again," she said, "you will fail in your duty to your neighbour if you do not come and see me, and drink some more of my vineyard."

"We shall come, assuredly, mademoiselle, but it will not be for the excellence of your vineyard."

"*A la bonne heure*," she returned. "I like good hearts and disinterested friendships. People who can love well—and hate well—are the salt of the earth. Now go in peace. My compliments to madame at the hotel, and my house is *not* the house of Nostradamus. That you will find not very far from the church."

And when we actually stood in front of the house, we felt there was no doubt about it: a quaint and curious tenement, tall, narrow, and wizard-looking: the very place the spirit of the astrologer might still haunt, working its spells upon town and people. We contented ourselves with the exterior. It was perhaps as well not to venture too rashly into the enchanted regions.

More agreeable was the garden of the hotel, in which after luncheon we took our coffee. They placed our table under the shadow of the trees, where the sun glinting through traced moving patterns about our feet, and a gentle breeze rustled and

murmured in the branches. Not far off, the green grass and vivid flowers refreshed and delighted the eye. Madame, with light step and sylph-like figure, flitted about this animated scene, fairy of the realms over which she presided.

"It's all very well," she said to us when we told her how Mademoiselle Charlotte had captivated us and delivered her message. "It's all very well for mademoiselle to say that; I know better. I don't have that frisson for nothing every time I enter the house; and I was quite in my senses when I saw the ghost go up that enormous chimney on a broomstick. But is she not delightful, that Mademoiselle Charlotte? She has a heart big enough to hold the whole town. Her hospitality has no limits, and the good she does is unbounded. I knew you would fall in love with her."

"But why has such a woman never married? Where have the eyes of the men been? It is incomprehensible."

"Not at all," returned madame. "Heaven never created a man of her generation good enough for her, and therefore ordained that she should live a single life. She is none the less happy for that, monsieur. The unmarried women of the world have not the worst of it."

We sipped our coffee, and meditated over these sentiments, whilst madame tripped over the lawn from bed to bed, herself a very fair flower, every now and then turning to us with some observation apropos of the town, or Mademoiselle Charlotte, or Nostradamus our bone of contention, or our own wanderings and impressions of the Valley of the Rhône.

It was a very pleasant resting-place after our morning amongst the wonders of Mont Major and the heights of Les Baux. Every now and then our thoughts would flit back to the good-natured Provençale whose prayers were to be offered on behalf of the heretic: to that eagle-owl with the wonderful eyes, that was to become our property, though as yet we knew it not. We mused, as in a dream, on the Roman monument outside St. Rémy, and the cloister hard by unknown to the world. What endless food for thought—what a world of wonders! That hour spent in the garden under the trees will be long remembered.

We were under a spell, but it was not the spell of a sooth-



ANCIENT CHURCH ON OUR WAY TO ARLES.



sayer. Nostradamus had nothing to do with the magic world in which we dwelt during that coffee-interval between luncheon and resuming our pilgrimage. It was a world of miracles and marvels, and no drive that we know of in the world could ever produce quite the same impression as that *Via Sacra* that lies between Arles and St. Rémy.

Thus we lingered up to the very last moment, unwilling to break the charm. We had eaten the lotus flower, and could have dreamed on for ever. But the last moment came; and we turned our backs upon St. Rémy and the right hand of good fellowship it had held out to us.

Our driver varied his route, and returned by unknown paths that were dull and prosy: a very different experience from the morning. A long, straight road, often tree-lined, always tame and monotonous. Nothing strange or unusual marked our going; no adventures; no monumental wonders, Roman or otherwise—with one remarkable exception: a marvellous Byzantine church, that suddenly flashed across our path like a meteor on the outskirts of Arles, taking us back to something like the eighth century: its effect, as it stood out against the afternoon sky, singular and impressive to the last degree.

Here indeed was another gem, unique of its kind, worthy of being placed side by side with the Roman tomb and triumphal arch outside St. Rémy; not to be found elsewhere. It came upon us like an oasis in a desert, and passed as a dream. Few know of its existence. It lies some little distance from the high road, and the driver said that nine people out of ten refused to turn aside and visit it. Who could anticipate anything so romantic, so wonderful in this prosy road, destitute of all other attractions whatsoever? The interior must have been sombre and impressive, but unfortunately it was closed and the keys were not forthcoming. As far as we could see, it was only lighted by one round window over the doorway. That we could not enter was a disappointment, but no doubt the great charm of the church lay in the exterior; its splendid tone and magnificent architecture. It stood out under the afternoon sky grey, majestic, silent. We were carried back in spirit to the early centuries, and the wonders those half-

civilised races performed. Of its kind we had seen nothing more striking, more full of charm and interest. It was yet one more attraction, one more splendour to be placed to the credit of this matchless Lower Valley of the Rhône, where day by day fresh marvels were discovered. The keeper of the key lived far off, said our driver. The church was never used and seldom opened. No one troubled about it. True, it had become a Monument Historique, or no doubt it would have been pulled down long ago. The people round about thought it encumbered the ground, which might better be given up to potatoes and cabbages.

Soon after, we passed into the atmosphere of Arles and its clattering streets. Our long day's drive was over: one of the most perfect and remarkable days of our lives: more than ever persuaded that this Rhône district is one of the richest and most favoured spots of earth.

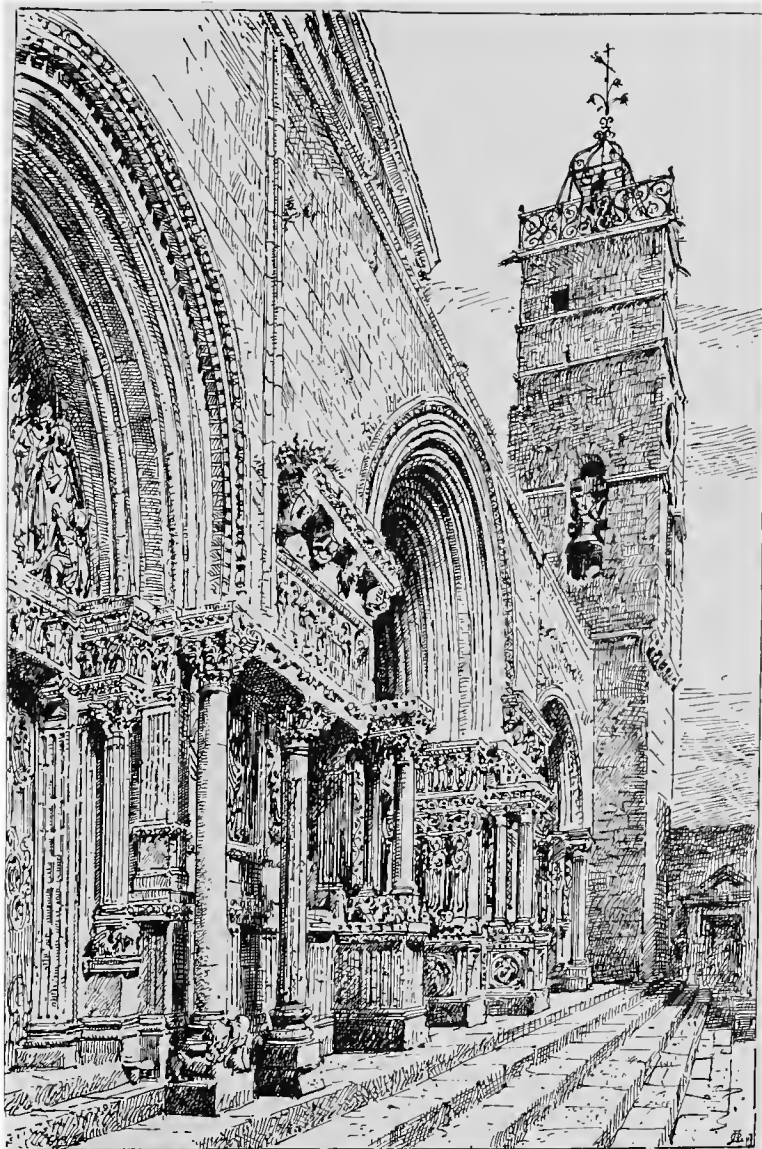
Arles with all its subtle influence was in no way disturbed by the rare scenes we had gone through. It holds its own, and without fear of comparison. We gazed upon the west front of St. Trophimus with as much delight as ever, and after our experience of Mont Major, the favoured saint was yet more interesting. We had seen nothing in point of size to equal the arena; nor such a galaxy of beautiful women as only the day before had charmed and surprised us.

"So you have returned, messieurs," said madame at the hotel, majestically; but it was a very different majesty from Mademoiselle Charlotte's. The one sprang from a fine mind and noble intentions; the other—— But comparisons are invidious.

"I am sure that all you have seen has delighted you," continued madame. "A day to be remembered. And we have an infinite variety of such excursions. A week here passes all too quickly."

H. C. trembled at the thought. "We should be reduced to skeletons, and go back to England in our bones," he murmured.

"Your next excursion," pursued madame, "must be St. Gilles, with its splendid church that is a world's wonder. People rave about the west front of St. Trophisme, but what is that to the church of St. Gilles? The one has three bays,



WEST FRONT OF ST. GILLES.



the other but one. Ah, monsieur, St. Gilles is not to be passed over."

To do madame justice, we found that she was really well up in the best points of the neighbourhood. Had she conducted her hotel with the wisdom she displayed in these matters, Arles would have left little to be desired. Therefore, we, who had long since heard of the famous church of St. Gilles, felt our enthusiasm light up and our curiosity aroused.

We started by train the very next morning. It was Sunday, an excellent day for seeing the church under the influence of a full congregation. The journey was not a long one, and we reached St. Gilles whilst the morning was still fresh and young.

We soon found there was little to be said in praise of the town.

It looked dirty and poverty-stricken, and the people seemed all of the humbler class. Approaching towards the church it grew somewhat more interesting. Though Sunday, the market was in full flow; the fruit so tempting that, like children, we bought handfuls and ate them on the quiet ramparts. Here again we found stores of artistic pottery.

Passing from this into a narrow street, we suddenly emerged upon a full view of the glorious west front, and stood rooted to the spot, silent and wondering. After all the squalor and poverty we had passed through this was a dream. In spite of much mutilation, we beheld one of the richest and finest portals in the world. Skill and architecture could do no more. Whether we took the doorways separately or together, right or left, the effect was supreme. A flight of steps led up to the portals, which stood well above the level of the poor and commonplace thoroughfare. This was a very small square, and no respect was being paid to the day or the service going on within, for a wandering pedlar—a veritable obstructionist—with stentorian lungs was gathering a rough crowd about him, and selling things by Dutch auction. Above the south portal rose a picturesque tower, that seemed to look down reproachfully upon this scene of contradictory elements.

To change the effect we went up the steps and entered through the centre doorway. It was crowded with a congre-

gation kneeling with bent heads. The service was just ending, and in a few moments there was a great stir and rustle and scraping of chairs, and the people streamed out at the south and west portals now thrown open. Above all the movement and rustle one heard the rasping voice of the auctioneer outside selling to the highest bidder.

The church was soon left to peace and solitude, and the great doors were closed. Then we realised that the interior was very uninteresting. Time was when it had been finer than now, but much of it had been destroyed. The ruins may all be seen behind the church, throwing their shadows upon the market place; and the people concerned themselves in no way about them as they touted for customers.

We bought our rich fruit—as much as we could carry away with us for a very small sum—and went out of the hubble-bubble of the narrow thoroughfares to the ramparts: the dullest, deadliest ramparts ever seen. But they looked on to an immense tract of country, through which the noble Rhône took its course; and far off we fancied we saw the sea and ships “with white sails flowing.”

Down in the town the people were all of one class; humble but well to do; not good-looking, in no way interesting; not, we thought, from the few we spoke to, intelligent: a fault one seldom has to find in France.

The best inn in the place was primitive. We entered, and ordered a modest omelette for déjeuner. The *salle-à-manger* was resplendent with wall paintings; wonderful streams and trees, and shepherds and shepherdesses clad in a way that indicated it was always summer where they dwelt: “*Honi soit qui mal y pense*” evidently their motto: an Arcadian simplicity to which perhaps we shall all some day return.

The woman who waited upon us was intensely proud of these masterly efforts. They were the work of the son of the house who had set up for himself in a far-off town and bid fair to outrival Gustave Doré—in her opinion. When we came to pay for our modest déjeuner, we found the charge equal to a first-rate Parisian restaurant, and mildly protested.

“Ah, monsieur, you must pay for the decorations—*quoi?*” aid the woman.



ST. GILLES : SOUTH-WEST DOORWAY.



We humbly objected that we could not eat decorations or carry them away with us.

"But you can feast your eyes upon them whilst you are here, monsieur," said this persistent lover of the fine arts. An empty feast we thought, and asked her whether she had ever heard of the Barmecide banquet.

"Barmecide," she returned, much puzzled; "was that a person or something to eat? But any way, nothing of the sort had ever belonged to St. Gilles."

So we paid our reckoning, and went back to the wonderful west front, where indeed was a feast of reason and a flow of soul.

In a side street close by, but out of sight of the church, was an extremely picturesque nook containing an interesting Romanesque house, one of the very few bits of the town worth inspecting. All round about it were cunning stone steps leading to other houses, and balconies with hanging creepers, and casemates with latticed panes. The tower of the church threw its shadow upon the old wood-work, which thus dwelt in the odour of sanctity. Well that it did so, perhaps, to counteract the other odours that abounded, neither sacred nor savoury, but very continental.

An old priest turned into the Romanesque house as we stood looking and admiring and wishing it had never been modernised. He was white-haired, rubicund and portly; and looking keenly at us, bowed and seemed friendly disposed. We half thought he was about to ask us into his house, and he was certainly more than half inclined to do so. Then indecision, or want of time, or shyness stepped in, and he passed through the doorway and disappeared.

We thought involuntarily of the old Canon we had met in Zaragoza, and a whole flood of recollections passed over us. All his charming hospitality, the quaintness of his housekeeper, the beauty of his house; the friendship which had suddenly begun but had not ceased. Above all, the interesting and beautiful woman, whom he had rescued from perils worse than death. We were still musing and looking at this quaint nook, when the old priest came out again rather hurriedly. This time he stopped and spoke in a rich round voice that corresponded with

his comfortable rotundity of person. He took short steps and rolled a little as he walked.

"I perceive that you admire antiquities," he said. "I am one myself," laughing. "This house that you are gazing at so intently and that I inhabit, has had an eventful history. It is too long to tell you all now, but if you are staying here, and would honour me later with a visit, I would post you up in the whole chronique of St. Gilles. On entering I found I had been summoned to a sick bed, and I must go. It is a case in which I am deeply interested. A fair young creature of twenty, who has been slowly wasting away until now the silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl is about to be broken."

But the morning had passed and our stay was drawing to an end; we were compelled to decline the good priest's hospitality.

"I am sorry," he said; "but if you come again to St. Gilles, pray call upon me, and I will show you a few nooks and corners that would probably otherwise escape you. The interior of my house is not worth seeing. All its merit—such of it as has escaped the hands of the renovator—lies on the surface. You have seen the crypt of the church?"

We replied that we had, and found it almost more interesting than the church itself.

"After all," said the priest, "there is very little of interest in St. Gilles excepting the west front. That has to a great extent survived time and opportunity. But for that, no one would ever come here, and we should sink into utter forgetfulness. The place is depressing to live in. Its people have no energy, no ambitions. More and more they are progressing backwards. The only thing that saves it now from extinction is the wine trade down on the banks of the canal. That keeps a certain amount of life and occupation in St. Gilles—the west front brings us an occasional visitor. But I must go. Fare you well, sirs; and if you carry away no pleasant recollections of the old place, at least give a kindly thought to the old priest who finds the burden of life weighty. I have no sympathetic companionship—so necessary to the heart of man—and no other reward for fulfilling life's duties than that of conscience. *Il faut se suffire à soi-même.*"



ST. GILLES: NORTH-WEST DOORWAY.



Away he went, with his quick step and rolling motion, when a window was suddenly thrown open and a shrill voice arrested him. He looked up.

"Monsieur le curé," said the voice, "you have forgotten your handkerchief. If you weep at the bedside of that poor creature, you will have nothing to dry your eyes with."

"Excellent woman," returned the priest. "But if I weep they will be tears of joy: joy that her sufferings are almost over and another angel is entering heaven."

"Tears of joy or sorrow," returned the practical housekeeper, "they are all the same. A pocket-handkerchief will be equally necessary." And down came the handkerchief through the air, falling at the old priest's feet. He picked it up, unfolded it, and put it into his pocket.

"Like Molière," he smiled, "I too am blessed with an excellent housekeeper. She also tyrannises over me, but she is not literary. We cannot have all the virtues."

Then he went his way.

The old housekeeper after gazing at his receding figure, gave us a friendly nod. "*C'est un ange de bonté*," she said, alluding to her master, "and he does more for the town than all the rest of the people put together. *Je vous salue, messieurs*."

With that she abruptly drew in her head and put down her window; and suddenly the little nook seemed empty.

We went round again to the west front. The small square was now in solitude: the auctioneer had departed and the crowd dispersed. On the steps of the church some sisters of mercy in black robes and large white caps were coming down, a most picturesque element in this singular scene. Their movements were full of grace, their faces looked peaceful and devoted. They too passed away, but unlike the old curé, did not stop and speak to us. On the contrary, as they caught sight of H. C.'s clasped hands and ardent gaze, a sea-shell pink came into their pale faces, and they lowered their eyes and quickened their steps.

"How they glorified that west front!" he murmured, as they flitted like silent shadows round the corner. "Really the picturesque element abounds abroad. I think I shall forsake prosy old England and take to a continental and Bohemian life."

We made no answer to this. Lady Maria would soon bring him to his senses: she to whom, rightly or wrongly, the very word Bohemian was suggestive of everything that was fast and fatal.

The little time that was left we thought we would devote to the banks of the canal, where the old priest had said the wine trade was carried on. It took us right through the town, which looked more uninteresting than ever. But the old bridge and the canal that ran beneath it so placidly made quite another world, again abounding in the picturesque. Barges were moored alongside, beautiful in outline, as barges always are. The quays were lined with wine-barrels. Under the shadow of the bridge men were ladling the wine into other barrels in rich red streams. All down the quays there were vaults in which the work was going on. Quantities of wine were stowed away that seemed inexhaustible. The men's hands and faces and clothes were all stained red—they breathed the very atmosphere of wine. It was running down wooden conduits from immense vats into smaller barrels, to be in readiness for exportation. These barges carried them away into the world.

We went into these working vaults and found the smell almost intoxicating, the odour of the pressed grapes pungent and disagreeable, and felt that if we had to make the wine we should never care to drink it. But it was an interesting experience, and the trade seemed on a large scale.

The canal stretched far away through the broad plain. On its surface, moored to the side of the quay, were the barges, and on one of them a husband and wife were taking their dinner *à fresco*: a young and interesting couple, who seemed devoted to each other. We had perched ourselves on a barrel very near to them, not at first observing that we were not alone. Here we could rest for the hour yet remaining to us, and the position was favourable to a contemplation of the scene—barrels, vaults, barges and water. All at once we were startled by a voice and a question.

“If *ces messieurs* were tired, would they condescend to take a little refreshment: a plate of *soupe à l’oseille* and a glass of *vin de St. Gilles*?”

It was very good of them, offering us of perhaps what they

had not in abundance for themselves. They were a very comely couple, and evidently the offer came straight from the heart. To refuse would have been churlish and ill-bred. Moreover soupe à l'oseille was one of our weaknesses; dating far back to days of childhood, and French influences and remote French country houses. It remains to this day: a refreshing delicacy unknown to England.

So we went on board, and under the serene Sabbath sky accepted the hospitality of strangers.

"They are not entertaining angels unawares," said H. C. with a great deal of humility—in his voice: "but I don't think they are so very far off."

We were careful not to indorse the sentiment. The soupe was excellent, and so was the wine: a cheap, ordinary wine, but perfectly pure and natural, and therefore delicious. A few sous no doubt bought a whole bottle, but as many shillings would have purchased no better in England. Everything was the essence of peace and tranquillity.

"You must spend a very happy life," we remarked, for in all the elements about us there was nothing of the commonplace. To us, the scene, the life on board, the handsome and devoted couple formed a prose idyll of the pleasantest description.

"I think we are as happy as most people," returned the bargeman. "We have few troubles and trials. We go out and we come in again, taking the barrels of wine to and fro. Our daily wants are easily supplied. A handful of oseille makes our soupe and we have as much wine as we want for nothing. So you see, monsieur, our hospitality that you are pleased to allude to, costs us little. The wife has a cunning hand with the pot-au-feu, and makes much out of nothing. She comes from Arles, monsieur; you can see that by her beauty."

We had thought as much. That handsome cast of features and well-posed head could not come from elsewhere.

"But you do not come from Arles," we said to the man: he was far too well-favoured for that.

"No," he answered, "I come from Marseilles. Once I hoped to be owner of a large three-master; never did I expect to come down to a barge; but I am just as happy; and with the wife at my side, I ask nothing more of Heaven."

"Verily," cried H. C., "a contented mind is a continual feast."

Our bargeman was to be envied. We felt we should like to sail down the canal with him under the blue skies and launch out upon the serene waters of the Mediterranean. Could anything on earth be more delightful? But it could not be. Our spare hour passed away all too soon. We thought we had been on board five minutes, when a clock struck, and roused us out of our day-dream. It was a cruel but inevitable moment. We bade them good-bye very reluctantly; that last hour had been by far the pleasantest we had spent in St. Gilles, and sent us on our way with an extremely happy and pleasant recollection. The bargeman and his wife had redeemed our visit.

It was a short journey back to Arles. By this time we had grown familiar with the narrow, echoing streets, and the omnibus that rattled through them from the station to the hotel—passing through the most commonplace parts of the town. Madame was of course at her door as the omnibus approached. She never failed in this part of her duty, whatever else was lacking. "A little civility costs nothing and goes a long way," was her motto. With her, a very long way indeed; having to atone for her Barmecide banquets. And she was always voluble about what we had seen and done.

"Was I not right, monsieur? Is not the west front of St. Gilles a perfect dream of architecture? Does it not put St. Trophisme into the shade, and make it look quite ridiculous? And now you must see Aigues-Mortes and La Camargue. La Camargue with its wild horses in the marshes, and its flocks of herons and pelicans and flamingoes. With its Saintes Maries, where people crowd in pilgrimages, and, I have heard, die of asphyxiation. Ah, monsieur, Arles and its neighbourhood—I tell you there is nothing like it in or out of the world."

What Madame knew of the realms beyond, we did not stay to inquire. If she had had acquaintance with angels it must have been in a far-gone time. Her wings had since dropped off, and did not seem inclined to grow again.

But as to Arles, she was right in praising it. As we wandered out that night in the moonlight, again we fell under

the influence of its charm. The west front of St. Trophimus, invidious comparisons apart, looked like delicate lace-work under the pale moonbeams. We went to the outer doorway of the cloisters and summoned the melancholy keeper. He drew aside the opening, and we saw the moonlight fall athwart pillars and passages—a pale, beautiful picture, but strangely suggestive of death and the night when no man can work. He had not the keys and could not admit us; and we muttered cabalistic words in favour of the relentless sacristan, and hoped they would send him horrible dreams of ghosts and goblins and bottomless pits.



A WATERFALL IN THE LOWER VALLEY.

We went round to the arena, which in the silvery moonlight looked more gigantic than ever and more wonderful. We managed to get to the top of one of the towers, and looked down upon the sleeping world; looked out upon the far-stretching plains, melting into utter darkness; shuddered at the far-off sky and flashing stars. Were they to be our world to come, and would they prove as cold and chilling in reality as they seemed to-night? Could we ever feel at home amongst them? Would this unfamiliarity become familiar?

Finally we made our way to the river side, always the end

of our walk, for we loved to gaze upon the broad, silent, flowing Rhône. Nothing could be more beautiful; and here was no unfamiliar element. If the stars in some mysterious way suggested death, the river spoke of eternity. Again there came the longing to plunge into its depths and drift away to the far-off sea; and we remained satisfied with looking down upon it, and tracing the wonderful moon-path that flashed and flickered again its countless jewels. And thinking of all the care-encumbered men that had gazed upon it since the far-off times of the Cæsars, each bearing his burden of sorrow, we almost wondered that the mighty secrets it had heard, and the many lives it had engulfed, had not disturbed its serenity for ever.

But there it ran, a broad, silent, flashing stream: and there it will run when you and I, reader, shall have crossed that other and more mysterious river, and taken flight to those far-off stars, or to some other realm unseen, unknown, where lies the paradise awaiting us.

## CHAPTER X.

"Flocks of flamingoes"—H. C. on stilts—Madame adds insult to injury—Starting for La Camargue—Madame's lively imagination—A lone country—Our fellow-traveller—"Madame is ancient"—A delusion—Savages—A place apart—Terrible pilgrimages—Dark clouds—Saintes Maries—A tornado—Ancient church—Strange people—Melancholy spot—The Curé—Kindly and hospitable—"To be here is banishment"—A desolate life—Wind and waves—Nearly left behind—A great storm—The scene changes—Aigues-Mortes—Walls and towers—In the Middle Ages—St. Louis of France—Psalmody-monks—Rallying for the Crusades—Embarkation—*La Monnaie*—*Veni Creator*—Francis I. and Charles V.—Aigues-Mortes of to-day—Tour de Constance—Wonderful view—Rude conveyance—Charming drive—A neglected paradise.

MADAME'S description had raised our enthusiasm, and fired with the idea of "flocks of flamingoes," we decided to visit La Camargue.

"The air is sometimes dark with these magnificent birds," cried madame, "with their long red legs and necks and bills. It is quite a lesson in natural history only to look at them."

This sounded interesting; we must see the flamingoes. They were birds associated with our childhood; had always for us possessed a special attraction. We would see these of La Camargue: perhaps catch one of them and help to furnish the wonderful Rhône Museum H. C. was bent on founding. He had worked it all out. The right-hand wing of the South Kensington building was to be entirely given up to him. If the authorities objected he would get a Bill passed through Parliament, turning out the curator and his colleagues, and constituting himself Commander-in-Chief of all the Museums in Great Britain.

"A new idea and a new title," he said, "but new ideas are

wanted. Before long I shall be made an Earl and a K.G. I would accept nothing under a K.G. Vacant? Oh, one is always falling in. Nelson was made Duke of Brontë: Wellington Marquis of Douro: I will be Earl of Rhône. I have an idea that for a consideration I may become the proud possessor of the best of the antiquities in the Arles Museum. What do you say? Not Natural History? Then we'll combine the two. Nothing like variety. Every man has his price, said Walpole—he was a great rascal for saying it, but he did say it, and no doubt he was right—and these Arles authorities are not going to prove an exception to the rule. With tact and money—the *suaviter in modo* and the rustle of bank-notes—nothing is impossible. What a splendid career we have before us! How I shall enjoy turning out all those dry old fossils of curators, who move with the speed of a tortoise, and think one change in a century sufficient! How I shall enjoy turning them out, and making myself Commander-in-Chief. How well it will sound. ‘The Right Honourable the Commander-in-Chief of all the Museums. Kensington Palace.’ I shall be given a suite of rooms there of course—at my own request.”

“But why Right Honourable—if you are not made an Earl?”

“Why, of course I shall be a member of the Privy Council. The Prime Minister will have to mind his P’s and Q’s when I am present, rely upon that. I suppose he attends Privy Councils as well as meetings of the Cabinet? But what led to this? Oh, the flamingoes. Madame says the air goes black with them in that queer place the Camargue. Makes one think of dear old Hans Christian Andersen and the flight of the swans. I always feel so dreadfully sorry for the brother who was left with one wing!”

Here, fortunately, madame came up, or H. C., who was in an exalted mood, would have talked for twenty-four hours.

Would we take our déjeuner with us, packed up in a basket?

This we felt was adding insult to injury. The luncheon would consist of plates and a few indigestible fragments. We declined the offer, pretending we would make a fast day of it. But every day was a fast at madame’s, and we were rapidly

qualifying for that bourne where the wicked cease from troubling and feasts and fasts are unknown.

It was a lovely morning, white clouds racing along the sky, which looked so blue and serene beyond them. H. C. was armed with some large *briquets* of salt for catching the flamingoes.

"What I want is a huge catapult," he said, "or a sling on a gigantic scale. We should then get any number for our South Kensington Museum. But if I can't put a little salt on their tails—they're rather wild birds, I fancy, not to say savage—I'll hurl these at them and bring them down like another Icarus. It wasn't salt in his case, was it? He got too near the sun, and his wings melted, or frizzled up. There must have been a terrible smell of burnt feathers. I think it was his vast flight brought him down. He was too ambitious."

The flamingoes had quite excited us. How could we tell that they only existed in madame's imagination, and that we should not see the ghost of a red flamingo? Yet we might have known that madame's imagination was lively and powerful. What else could honour guests with Barmecide feasts, and charge in the bill for sumptuous banquets? What else describe the hotel in a small brochure as the best appointed, most comfortable in the whole of Provence? We envied madame her imagination. She ought to have written books, and become the rival of Dumas. Monte Christo would have been nowhere in comparison.

The train started punctually. There was a freshness in the air, and everything seemed to sparkle. Not an indication was there that before long a sudden gale would arise, a storm and tempest, a perfect tornado, melting our salt and knocking us about like ninepins.

The train had few passengers. La Camargue is thinly populated. Few people have business with it unless they live there; and those who live there seldom travel even to the little world of Arles. A large, lone tract of country, this Camargue; once nothing but a swampy marsh, into which you sank almost as into a quicksand. Irrigation has changed all this. It is still lonely and desolate; in parts still marshy; but much of it has been cultivated, and where once was a damp and malarial desert, now fair crops wave in the wind.

Mile after mile passes, and you never see a house or any sign of human life. A land bare and uncivilised and out of the world, where the people are a race apart, barbarous if not exactly heathenish. But in the last few years a railway has been opened up, taking people to the extreme end of the Camargue, and it may safely be said that the barbarous days are numbered. Intelligence and civilisation will gradually alter the face of things. Villages will arise, people spread over the plains. The land still unreclaimed will presently also become cultivated and productive, cease to be a refuge for the wild horses and the herons that love loneliness. Its present character will disappear, and with it all its interest.

But that day has not yet come, and when we steamed out of the station, we began to look for the flamingoes, the wild horses, the herons and the storks.

"I hope," said H. C. mildly, "there are no wild bandits also: no modern Claude Duvals or Jack Sheppards; no brigands like those of Sicily and Spain and Greece. But no, it would hardly be worth the candle. They would fly for higher game."

The train went on through the lone and desolate plains, which yet had a distinctive feature of their own. They were deep and fine in tone: that dark rich tone one sees in peat districts: a tone that ever reminds us of the Shetland Islands, making them like no other islands we ever saw. The Camargue has it to some extent. But it looked desolate as a remote tract in South Africa or the far-off Sahara. Every now and then the train stopped at a station, and perhaps one solitary house was all that could be seen in the way of human habitation, and not always that. Sometimes the train stopped and no one got in or out; at most one or two country people would alight and pass out into the lonely plain, as though, like the scapegoat of old laden with the sins of the people, they were about to disappear for ever from the world.

We looked for the flamingoes, the wild horses and the herons—and looked in vain: they were conspicuous by their absence. We kept going on, thinking we should come to them, but we never did come to them. Every now and then we looked up to see if the sky were growing dark and obscured by

the flight of the flamingoes ; but it remained open, calm, and bright, casting no other shadow than that caused by the sailing clouds.

Then a young fellow entered the carriage : an intelligent young man, who was a sort of overseer of the Camargue, got out at every station, blew everybody up, and generally raised the depressing deadly-lively tone of the place. To him we appealed for information.

"Flamingoes," he said, "and wild horses and herons? Well, I know as much about the Camargue as most people, but I have seen no flamingoes in *my* time. Perhaps they have migrated to the Canary Islands, or the Spice Islands, where at least they will have beauty and scent; but in the Camargue you will not find them. Madame at the hotel? Well, she is ancient. They may have been here in her childhood. I don't know; I wasn't born then. No one can answer for what took place before he was born. Besides, madame has an imagination: she charges for dinner, and people get nothing. And it all goes on because there is no opposition. A good hotel would be the making of the place—and the making of the keeper."

"But if there are no flamingoes," we said, indignant at the false hopes raised within us, "what about the wild horses and the herons?"

"One at a time," said our amiable overseer. He was quite a gentlemanly young man, well-dressed and well-mannered: but the latter comes naturally to the French, taking them as a nation. "The wild horses. Well, there were wild horses, and there are still; but like the elephants in South Africa, which have retreated inland before the advancing railway, the wild horses of the Camargue have very wisely got as far away as possible from our excruciating steam whistle. I am always at the engine drivers for the abominable and unnecessary noise they make. Wild horses have their nerves just as much as fine ladies. Why not? So now you may go day after day through the Camargue by train, and unless you get out and explore the remote plains, you will never see a wild horse."

"And the herons?"

"Just the same. The steam whistle has frightened them away. Down the plains you may see any number of them, standing on one leg; looking uncommonly wise or excessively stupid—I never know which it is. But if you go near them they take flight, and a whole flock will disappear and alight on the sea-shore and contemplate their image in the sand pools."

"You seem to have watched the habits of these creatures," remarked H. C.

"Often and often, from my childhood," he answered. "I feel in sympathy with the animal world. Not," laughing, "that there is anything animal about me—at least I hope not. But birds, beasts and fishes, I love them all. It is only human beings that bore me with their everlasting chatter. I have a few friends that I delight to be with, that I love from the profoundest depths of my heart: I would face death for them, suffer martyrdom with them; am only truly happy amongst them. For the rest—they may go and join the flamingoes and the wild horses, and make themselves scarce. You are going to Saintes Maries?"

"Yes. Just to see it and to return. It was really the flamingoes brought us here. So we feel rather as if we had been taken in."

"Oh, but it is worth a visit. You should see Les Saintes Maries. Everyone should do so. It is the last remnant of barbarism at the end of this nineteenth century. You cannot imagine the nature of the people. *Figurez-vous!* They are perfect savages. Instead of wanting people to come amongst them and spend money amongst them, they do everything they can to keep them away. If they see a stranger they first hide their faces like an ostrich, then turn and throw stones at him. If people come to stay for the bathing, they charge them double price for everything, hoping to drive them away. Amongst themselves they are quite savage."

"Surely you are exaggerating?"

"Not in the least," he returned: "quite the contrary. I assure you the Camargue is quite a place apart from the rest of the world. And yet it might be a paradise. If I had the ordering of it, in ten years' time it would be a Garden of Eden, full of fruits and flowers, and peopled with happy, prosperous

folk. Not an acre should be lying idle except as pleasure ground. It possesses all these possibilities, but no one has the energy to take the matter in hand and carry it through. The people of Provence are lazy and idle. I daresay I should be lazy and idle too," he laughed, "but my mother came from the wholesome north. She was a Norwegian—extremes meet, you will say—and I take after her."

"We know the Norwegians well, and love them," we replied. "They are a fine race, and you are fortunate in half belonging to them. But from what you say of La Camargue, the people must be worth studying, if only as savages and aborigines. Where else will you find them in these days under your very vine and fig tree? To discover what you describe you must at least go to the South Sea Islanders."

"I don't know," he returned. "To me there is nothing interesting about them. But then, you see, for me they have not the freshness of novelty. I have been amongst them all my life, more or less. They don't hide their faces when they see me, or treat me to stones and lunatic cries and imprecations. But what is all that salt for?" he asked, peering at H. C.'s ponderous parcel.

"To put on the tails of the flamingoes and catch them for our great museum," replied H. C. with composure. Our traveller laughed heartily.

"You will have to return it to its original home—the salt sea," he said. "All the salt about here comes from Aigues-Mortes, where you will see it stored in any number of large white pyramids. A stranger once asked me if they were tombs—like the Pyramids of Egypt. I told him yes, which of course was very wrong, but if people will be so dense they must expect to be treated accordingly."

"Who will to Cupar, maun to Cupar," murmured H. C., though it was not quite easy to follow the quotation.

"And what about the pilgrimage to Saintes Maries?" we asked. "You alluded to them just now."

"Ah, the pilgrimages," he returned. "Never come here during a pilgrimage. They are most awful things. I shudder to think of them. If you joined one and went through one, you would die: and a violent death it would be. I repeat they

are most awful, horrible things, and ought to be put down with the strong hand of the law. Crowds come to them; superstitious crowds; some of them terribly afflicted, some not. Many are the very lowest of the low, covered with filthy rags. They swarm into the church until it is packed like sardines in a tin. They fight and struggle for places. Will you believe that for three days they never move out of that church, day or night, no, not for an instant? They have their food with them and economise it. If they left the church they would lose their place, and so there they stay. No; do not ask me any details. I draw a veil over the whole thing, and leave it to your imagination. But if you had the imagination of madame at the hotel you would not come near the truth. Do you think this ought to be permitted—and under the name of religion? It is a sin and a shame to the powers at large. But now that we have the railway, I am hoping that in time the savages will be converted and the pilgrimages stopped: though the power of the priests and the superstition of the people take a terrible amount of uprooting.”

“You are not a Roman Catholic?”

“Not I,” he returned. “I belong to the simple faith of my mother’s people, in which I hope to live and die. But here we are at Saintes Maries. They are not contented with one Mary,” he laughed; “they must have all three.”

Whilst we had been talking, a great change had come over the weather. Dark clouds obscured the face of the sky; a mighty wind arose; there was every sign of an approaching storm and tempest; whether wind or rain would gain the victory remained to be seen.

The deep grey tone now thrown by the sky suited the sombre landscape. Nothing could be finer or more solemn than these dark shadows falling upon the plains: a sense of harmony far greater than under the brilliant sunshine. Given much of this influence and the savage character of the little race apart might be understood: corresponding a little to the sad tones of Brittany which find their reflection in the minds of its people; not producing savageness and barbarity: far from it: but a subdued, melancholy view of life; a deeply religious tendency with no great aspirations; a con-

tentment with things as they are that, until the last few years, has kept the Breton a century behind the rest of the world.

The train stopped at Saintes Maries, a small station, where there seemed to be one official for everything.

"Do you go back by the next train?" said our fellow-traveller.

"Yes."

"Then you have just an hour and a half to give to the wonders of the place, church, curé and all—you are sure to come across the curé. I go back by the same train—heaven be praised! So I to my work and you to your pleasure; and may you have a good time—and au revoir. I hope you will bring back a few specimens of flamingoes."

He went off with his high spirits and superabundant energy; one whom it was good to meet; who threw his whole life and soul, all his earnestness of purpose, into what his hand found to do; contending that the sluggards of the world, who do nothing thoroughly, should all be transported into the Bush, where life depends upon work.

We left the station, and before us stood the little pilgrimage town and church of the Camargue: Saintes Maries. It was the first time we had seen a cluster of houses since leaving Arles.

A tornado seized us as we crossed the road against which it was impossible to stand. It took us and knocked us about like ninepins, and at one moment threatened to whirl us up to the heights of the church tower. Ancient and picturesque it looked, that church, standing out conspicuously above the low surrounding houses. We gazed down the streets, and as the people saw us they fled into their doorways, peeping round with one eye like shy children, to see whether we were coming. In their appearance there was nothing savage or barbarous; what they possessed of that lay in mind and manners, in disposition, in ignorance and superstition. Many of them had lived here for generations; the thoughts and habits of forefathers had descended to them unchanged; there was no progress; what they had been a hundred years ago, they were now. But, as our fellow-traveller remarked, the iron horse had taken the place of the wild one, and the change would come. To-day they did not throw stones at us, or treat us to

imprecations. Did they think that the wind was treating us roughly and doing it all for them? The stones and imprecations would have been almost preferable.

After we had passed down one narrow, curious street, they ventured out of their dens to look at us: and when we turned for a general field view, they rushed in again like frightened hares. It was quite comical and amusing.

A very deadly-lively, very deserted place it seemed as we wandered up and down, given up to these fisher-folk and their element. What they did, how they lived, was a marvel. No doubt the sea chiefly gave them their food. We could hear it surging and breaking upon the shore—loveliest sound in nature; thrilling like a grand harmony, though no harmony ever yet approached it.

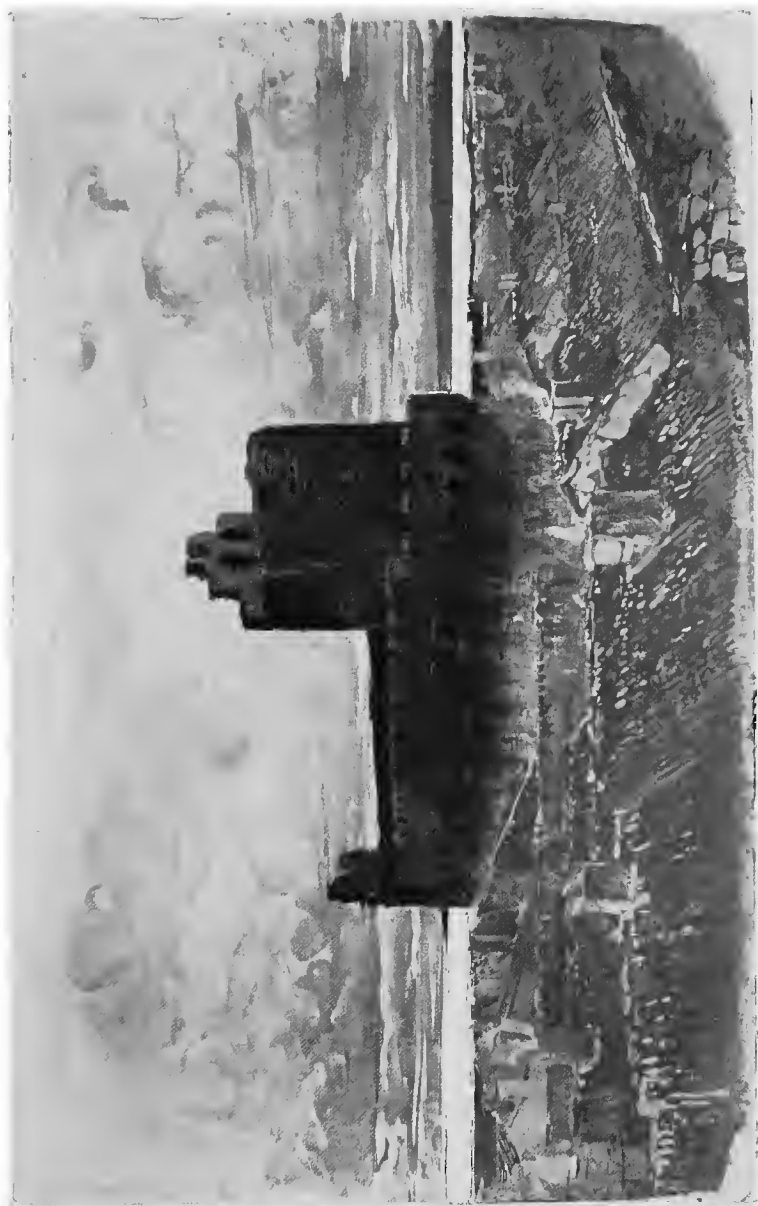
In the small square close to the church, we saw the priest at his window, who, not at all like the inhabitants of the place, came out and spoke to us. The vicarage was low and long and interesting. This might be called the ecclesiastical close, where barbarism did not reign.

He was very kind and attentive, this good priest, and bared his head to the wind. It was close shaven and there were no locks to buffet, but we begged him to be covered that we might do likewise.

"You have come at an unfortunate moment," he said. "And yet this grey sky and fierce wind will give you a truer idea of the remote, uncivilised place, than if you had come with blue skies and sunshine."

He took us into the church, which was ancient, dark and gloomy. We shuddered as we thought of the pilgrimages and the scenes our traveller had described. Could such things be, we asked the priest.

"Alas, I fear I must say yes," he replied. "Some will come in with crutches, and I have seen crutches broken as they fought for places. Sometimes they really do each other harm. But that is not the worst. I have tried and struggled, prayed and petitioned in vain. Up to now, the Camargue has been a neglected spot, hors jurisdiction. It is difficult to wake up the authorities. Would you care to come to the next pilgrimage and see it all from an outside point of view? I would put you



SAINTES MARIES.



up in my little house. You could not be comfortable elsewhere—and my own abode is humble enough. To be here is banishment. Not a creature with whom to exchange an idea; alone in a crowd; nothing but a few books for companionship; my one recreation walking upon the sea-shore, and now and then a day's sea-fishing."

We declined his hospitable offer, rather too emphatically perhaps. It was quite sufficient to imagine the scenes he had painted. But we felt sorry for the priest, and his lonely, desolate life.

"I preach to them," he said, "but they are insensible blocks of wood and stone. With here and there an exception, they have no heart to reach, no emotions to be stirred. But will you not come and take a modest *déjeuner* with me?" he asked in the kindest manner. "I have nothing but the plainest fare to offer you: eggs, and fresh bread-and-butter, and coffee that I roasted myself this morning."

"Fare for an emperor," we replied, but again had to decline, this time reluctantly. Time failed us; the train would not wait, and there was none other until late at night. We thanked the good priest—he was quiet and gentle and kindly-disposed—and wished him promotion: a return to civilised regions: and then bade him farewell.

He parted regretfully, and we could quite understand it. His offer was a kindness to us, our acceptance would have been a charity to him; a breath from the outer world; an interchange of thoughts and ideas; a break upon his solitude on which he would have lived for a month.

We struggled away from the church to the sea-shore. The wind howled and raged like an army of demons. We gasped for breath as it took us and knocked us about until we reeled and staggered as men in wine.

But how magnificent the scene! Before us, on the shore, a huge stone cross raised its head, outlined against the dark sky. Very effective and solemn it looked: and many a fisherman struggling in towards the land through a tempestuous sea—every moment threatening destruction—must have offered up many a silent prayer as his eye caught the outlines of this emblem of his faith.

To-day the sea rolled up in great waves, lashed into fury by the tempest. Stretching far away to the horizon, it looked cold and grey and sublime, cruel and impenetrable; engulfing all it could into its mighty bosom, but returning nothing. Close to the shore some fishing-boats, safely moored, were tossing about like floats upon the restless water. For miles the shore stretched away, with its loose white sands and broken downs; an intensely sad and solitary scene, not a creature in view but ourselves; a picture to dwell in the mind for ever.

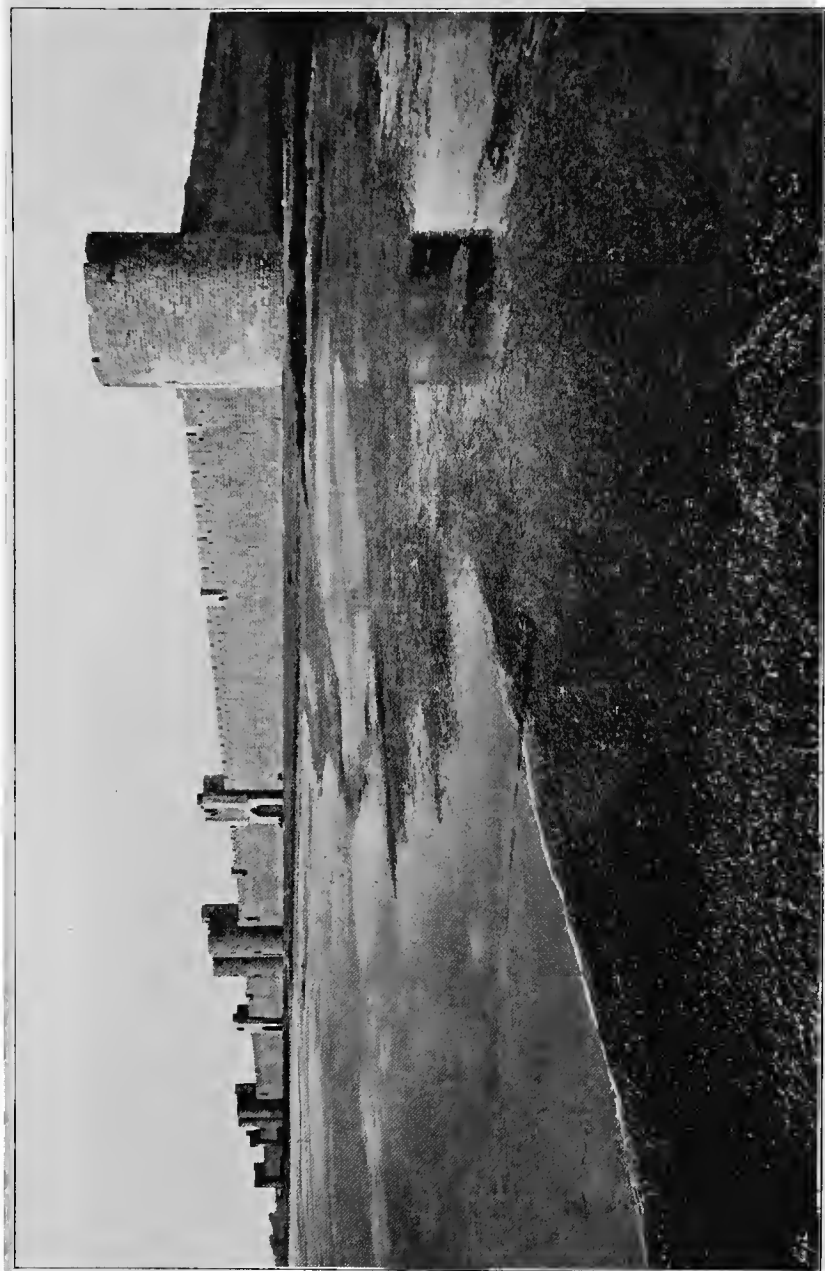
The wind increased in fury, and we could only stand against it by holding on to each other. Yet it was the very day and weather we would have chosen. The rain had kept off, and in this tempest of wind Saintes Maries was magnificent, the raging elements sublime.

We stayed contemplating that never to be forgotten vision until it was time to go back to the station. The train, we had been warned, was punctual to the moment; would wait for no one; as though in these desolate and mournful plains moments were golden. We were only just in time. Our fellow-traveller on the platform waved energetically; before we could enter the carriage the solitary official gave the signal for departure. There was not even a hornblower to start us on our way—wonder of wonders: and our traveller must have bribed the driver, for the engine did not even whistle. We were the only passengers.

"Are we really off?" we asked, as the train quietly moved away.

"Indeed we are," was the reply; "and you were nearly being left behind. You should have had five minutes' grace; I would have kept it waiting so long—but even my authority would hardly have persuaded the station-master to anything beyond. Ten minutes' delay would have sent him raving mad."

We were just in time in more senses than one. No sooner had the train started than the rain came down as though waterspouts had broken in the clouds or flood-gates suddenly opened. Such rain we had never seen. It drowned our voices until we had to shout to each other; hissed and spluttered and splashed; we trembled for the windows; what



THE WALLS OF AIGUES-MORTES.



with the rain and the wind, the train rocked to and fro like a cradle and threatened to overturn. Then came a blinding flash of lightning out of the dark sky; flash after flash in rapid succession; peal after peal of thunder, shaking the very foundations of the desolate plains of the Camargue. It seemed over our very heads; and once, when there came a crash like a volley from all the artillery of earth, a stream of fire ran across the ground and split a solitary tree in twain. It was a majestic but very awful sight.

The good train struggled bravely on its way through fire and water, through flood and field, and no evil touched us: and when we steamed into Arles it was all over. The wind and the rain had ceased; blue skies and sunshine had returned; nature looked like the face of a child, fresh and fair, on which the tears of recent sorrow have scarcely dried.

We parted with regret from our fellow-traveller, who promised to call for us in the evening and accompany us round the town.

And now let us quickly change the scene. As the crow flies it is not far, but without wings we cannot accompany the crow, and must take the train with its circumbendibus. Our destination is Aigues-Mortes.

It is the morning of the next day. Yesterday's storm has cleared the air, and never do we remember a brighter, more sparkling atmosphere. Every breath we take is as a draught of champagne. Midsummer heat again reigns.

We had long had a desire to see Aigues-Mortes; one of those places that had dwelt for years in our imagination; interesting alike for itself and its history. When we left the train it was with something like a beating of the heart. There was a little distance to walk, and rough vehicles at the station invited us to drive, but we preferred our independence.

The journey had been very interesting: a fertile, laughing country yielding at last to more sandy and barren plains possessing a wild, distinct charm of their own. As we walked along we almost felt in an uncultivated desert, bringing with it a delicious sense of freedom.

Then suddenly there rose up before us, at a little distance,

outlined against the clear blue sky, the grand and matchless walls of Aigues-Mortes, with their splendid gateways and multiplied towers and turrets. Above all, raising its proud head, was the Tour de Constance; picturesque, intensely



AIGUES-MORTES.

interesting, but with no sign of blush or weeping for all the horrors it has witnessed, the miseries it has enclosed.

Here we have one of the few towns which take us back to the Middle Ages. Aigues-Mortes dates from the days of Saint Louis: and Saint Louis it should have been named rather than the present sad and ominous word, too suggestive of the malarial

fever and death that in days gone by lurked in its surrounding marshes.

But to-day we had nothing to do with all this. Its dangers have passed, together with the cruelties and persecutions its walls and towers have looked down upon.

St. Louis of France founded the town, building it after the model of Damietta: Eastern type with which he was familiar: and from this spot he embarked for his crusades in the Holy Land. He loved the place; saw and felt all its beauty; its splendid situation; the wonders of earth, sea and sky, all the natural possibilities and advantages that distinguished it as favoured of earth and heaven. Here he commenced to build the remarkable town which his son Philip the Bold completed, and which remains to this day.

Louis IX. was in advance of his time. Justice above all was his thought and feeling, where hitherto might before right had been the rule of life and action. But for long the crusades had been the theme of the world. For two centuries action and enthusiasm were gaining ground to the motto of "God wills it!" Then in 1247 came a great and final appeal—the seventh of its kind—and suddenly the world seemed on fire; enthusiasm reached its highest point; and on the plains and shores of Aigues-Mortes more than 60,000 combatants assembled themselves.

It was a great change. Until then, nothing had been seen on those desolate shores but the Psalmody-monks in their black robes, pacing to and fro before the advancing and receding tide; nothing heard but the perpetual chanting and psalm-singing which gave them their name, and which never ceased, but day and night, year in and year out, ascended as incense to the skies.

To this succeeded the 60,000 men of war.

In the month of August, here came St. Louis, with his wife Margaret, with his two brothers Charles of Anjou, afterwards King of Sicily, and Robert Count d'Artois, destined to find his death on Eastern plains.

At that time Venice and Genoa had the monopoly of naval construction, and their cumbersome and heavy vessels were only to be matched by the ignorance that commanded them. Never-

theless, nothing better was to be had, and Louis thought himself fortunate when a fleet was placed at his disposal.

He had taken shelter in a modest house at Aigues-Mortes. The town was in its infancy, and he there and then granted it many privileges for all time. But though man proposes, God disposes: and the glory and privileges of Aigues-Mortes have departed.

It was as yet so small that numberless tents were erected on the surrounding plains for the warrior-chiefs with their trains.



TOUR DE CONSTANCE.

Amongst them were Gaston de Béarn, Roger Bernard, Comte de Foix, the powerful Duc de Bourgogne, the Counts of Bretagne, de la Marche and Dreux, Gauthier and Henri de Brienne, Trencavel, Vicomte de Beziers with his faithful friend de Castres, Mathew de Montmorency, Boson de Talleyrand, Geoffroy de Chateaubriand and Pierre de Nemours: the latter described as the most loyal and most upright man ever seen. But it is unnecessary to enumerate names.

Every nation had its special camp, distinguished by its standard. On one the English leopard was conspicuous, on

another the golden lion of Brabant; again shone the golden lion of Auvergne; on the Venetian flag waved the lion of St. Mark; again one saw suspended the great red cross of Genoa, side by side with the triple crown of Pontifical Rome. Highest of all, the simple standard of St. Louis.

On the 20th August all was ready: and on Tuesday 25th the King's procession set out for the small church of the town, Notre Dame des Sablons, there to invoke the blessing of Heaven on their holy mission.

Then took place the embarkation: from Aigues-Mortes right down to the sea a gorgeous scene and movement and activity such as was never found there again. The fleet stretched seawards in an unbroken line; the pageantry was dazzling, enthusiasm irrepressible. Knights in their glittering uniforms were resplendent.

Amidst these, conspicuous for the simplicity and severity of his dress, came Louis IX. A dignified but dreamy melancholy marked his features; his figure was thin, almost fragile; his pale, refined face, almost too delicate for the great work in hand, framed in long fair hair. His smile was sweet and gentle; absolute confidence and repose distinguished his bearing. He was devoted to his cause; placed his whole trust in Heaven, whose aid he had invoked, and went forth nothing doubting. The whole population of Aigues-Mortes (not a very great one as yet) accompanied him, and the air rang with their acclamations. But the King's modesty never forsook him; he was most humble of men.

Arrived at his vessel, *La Monnaie*, he embarked with the Queen and princes. A royal chapel fitted up on board was permitted for the first time on record to carry the Holy Eucharist. The religious element had in no way been forgotten. Mingling with the warriors were pilgrims, staff in hand, waists encircled by the chaplet. Monks and brethren of every order might be distinguished, conspicuous amongst them the Trinitarians with their white flannel robes and brown cloaks, and faces concealed in hoods of brilliant colour.

On Friday the 28th August, 1247, the wind was declared favourable, the pilot was summoned to make sail. Then chaplains, monks, bishops, the whole ecclesiastical retinue

assembled on the royal deck, prayers were offered up, and from end to end of the fleet there went pulsing and swelling through the air the magnificent hymn of the *Veni Creator*. All heads were bowed, all hearts stirred. Then came the command: "Make sail in the name of the Most High!" And full of majesty and dignity, the fleet passed out into the broad waters of the Mediterranean.

The centuries rolled on, Aigues-Mortes flourished, and yet another royal pageant assembled at its gates. Francis I. and Charles V. met in solemn truce: sincerity on the side of the French King, duplicity on that of the Spaniard.

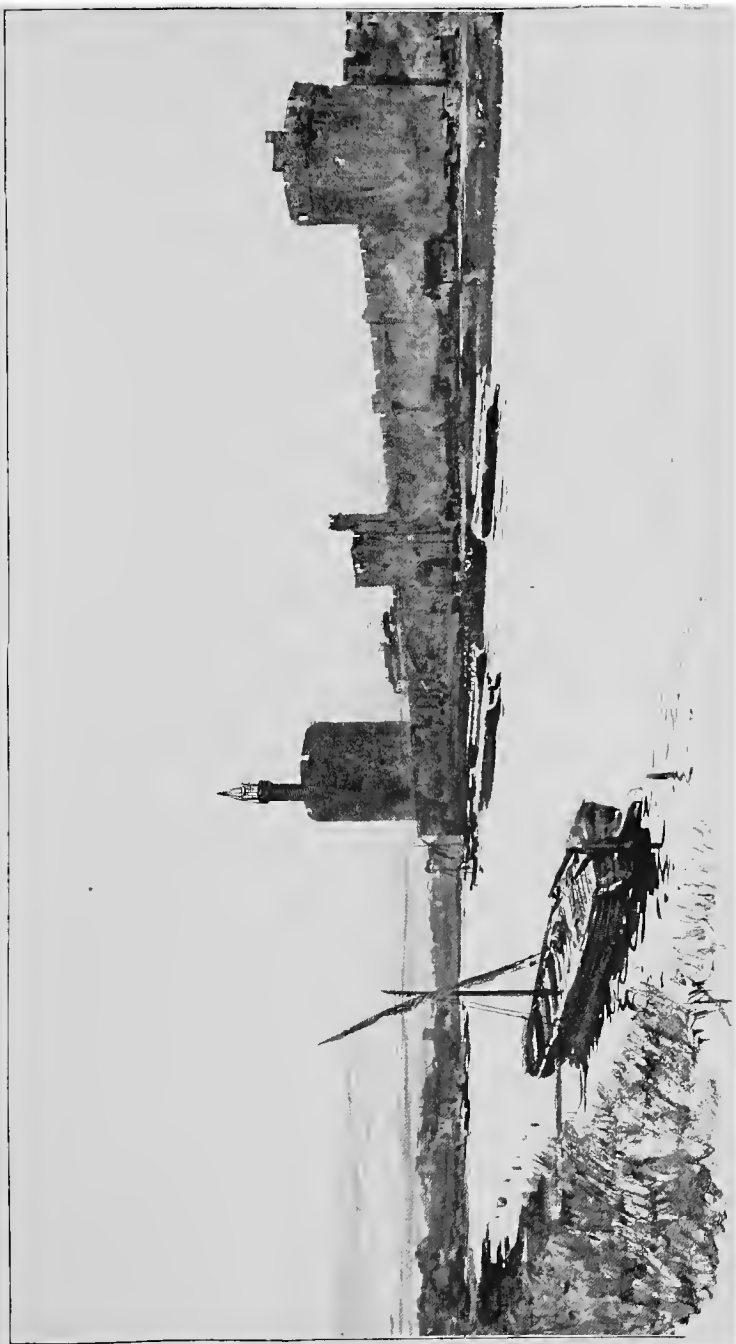
There had been war between them, when Francis was taken prisoner and his sons were left as hostages with Charles until the promises he made were fulfilled. That was now all matter of history. The monarchs had parted at Nice, they now met at Aigues-Mortes. The meeting puzzled all Europe, but this was Charles's intention. The great deceiver, he has been called by historians; but he was cautious and diplomatic with all his craftiness, and successfully duped all Europe, including the too trusting Francis.

He arrived in state, having just quitted Marseilles, where the keys of the town had been offered him in the name of the King: that town that two years before he had vainly tried to conquer. Francis met him at the entrance to the port. Charles received him standing on board his own vessel, and they embraced after the manner of kings. "My brother," said Francis, "once more behold me your prisoner."

Then they sat down side by side and talked for hours as close friends. Francis nobly forgot the past and its treachery.

The next day Charles landed at Aigues-Mortes and the whole population went out to receive him; quays and walls were lined with eager faces.

At ten o'clock, accompanied by a great retinue, to the sound of trumpets and tambourines, on horses weighted with rich trappings, Francis and his suite went forth to meet the Emperor. Queen Eleanor, who was present, advanced rapidly as the monarchs met, and placing her arms round them—her husband and her brother—held them in one embrace, overjoyed at the reconciliation.



AIGUES-MORTES.



The procession formed. Behind Charles and Francis came the Queen : then Henri of Navarre ; Queen Margaret, who had come to Aigues-Mortes to embark for Spain, that she might share her brother's captivity ; Montmorency, who had just been made constable for successfully holding Provence against the Emperor ; and many others, including the two sons of the King—all that now remained to him, for the others had been poisoned.

The monarchs seemed the best of friends. Brilliant fêtes marked the day ; sumptuous banquets sufficient to satisfy even the enormous appetite of the Emperor. Costly presents were exchanged, and Charles decorated Francis with the Order of the Golden Fleece. Many political plans were discussed and arranged : war against the Turk ; a marriage between the Crown Prince of Spain and Margaret, daughter of Francis, which greatly pleased Queen Eleanor, who longed to cement the friendship between the two men dearest to her on earth.

The following day Charles re-embarked, and this master in deception wrote to his wife, the Empress Isabella : " We separated so mutually pleased and charmed, our thoughts and opinions so united, that each has the welfare of the other at heart more than his own."

Yet in the end this meeting was profitable alone to Charles. He completely turned the tables upon Francis ; caused him to be looked upon with disfavour by the rest of Europe ; and when three years after, Francis, compelled to acknowledge the Emperor's treachery, once more went to war with him, the latter had in every way strengthened and improved his position. The frank and loyal nature of Francis was no match for the crafty wiliness of the Spanish monarch.

So with feelings keenly roused we approached this historical old place ; this town of the Middle Ages, that so vividly recalls the centuries of the past. With no slight emotion we saw rising before us the brown walls with their gates and bastions, towers and turrets : conspicuous to the right, the Tour de Constance. Of the town itself not a trace could be seen ; it lay within the walls ; low tenements protected from wintry winds. Those walls, wonderfully preserved, might have been built yesterday, and look strong enough to defy all earth's

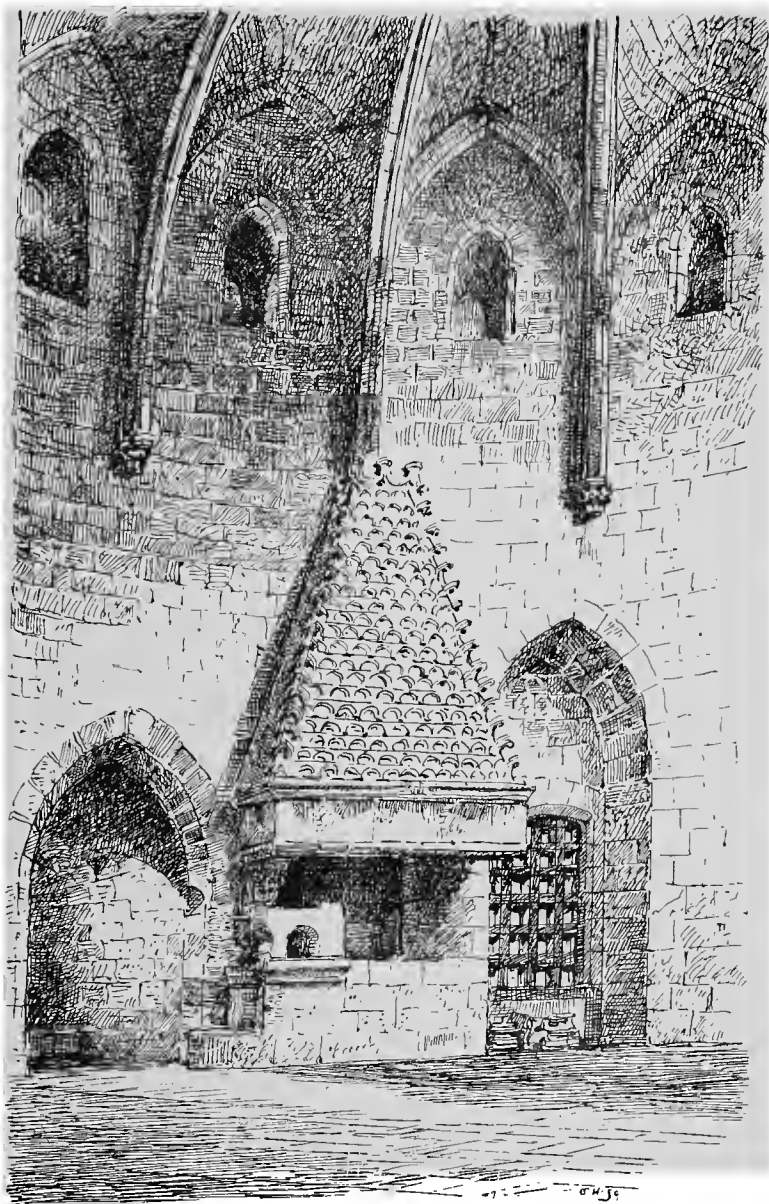
artillery. Above them rose the bluest of blue skies ; in Italy itself we had never seen them more radiant.

Within the walls the mediæval atmosphere had been much interfered with. If the walls were perfect, the town was disappointing. There was a more or less poverty-stricken air about it ; streets were narrow, houses for the most part low and small ; a large proportion whitewashed, giving out a certain Eastern impression and making the blue skies yet bluer. The people were not interesting, could boast of nothing old-world or stately ; the mantle of the Middle Ages had in no way fallen upon them. They were not even good-looking or picturesque ; no costume distinguished them, but a prosy, untidy, commonplace, latter-day element. As strangers we attracted some attention ; as Englishmen seemed hardly popular. They did not escape into their houses, like the Saintes Maries savages, nor throw stones and imprecations ; but from their looks they rather seemed to regard us as intruders come to spy out the nakedness of the land.

Very naked and barren it was, in the way of inns. We went to the best and ordered an omelette—our *pièce de résistance* in all these out-of-the-way places. Go where you will in France, you are pretty safe in ordering an omelette and a salad. One could hardly say the same of England.

The inn was very primitive, and this at least might easily have belonged to the Middle Ages. The *salle-à-manger* frightened one with its army of flies, even in the month of November. Our battles of flies at Nîmes were as nothing compared with Aigues-Mortes. But again the people seemed used to them, and accepted them with resignation, as philosophers bow to the inevitable.

Whilst déjeuner was preparing, we went out to inspect the walls and the Tour de Constance. Round about this tower is the best part of the town. Close to it is the palace of St. Louis, beautifully decorated with a modern yellow wash that made it look very uninteresting. Nevertheless, with a certain amount of imagination one could fancy the pale face of the good King looking serenely from one of the windows : gazing up at the blue skies, as though questioning the will of Heaven or asking the Divine blessing upon his approaching crusade.



SALLE DES CHEVALIERS, TOUR DE CONSTANCE.



We found the custodian of the tower, who brought his keys and seemed devoted to his office. Crossing the bridge, he turned the lock, and the great door rolled back. The age of the tower is supposed to be unknown, is said to date before the walls, but bears every trace of the fourteenth century. We have no space here to devote to its history, surrounded by interest of the most painful kind: how it became a Huguenot prison of the worst and most trying description: how its prisoners, men and women, suffered long years of horrible martyrdom for their faith. A sad and tragic story.

The tower itself is impregnable, of tremendous substance, the walls 20 feet thick at the base. We entered a round, picturesque, very striking room of Gothic architecture, the *Salles des Gardes*. On one side was a wonderful old chimney, and beside it a portcullis window, and one trembled to think of its uses in days gone by. The roof was groined, and the groins sprang from small beautifully carved capitals. Above this was another chamber, the *Salle des Chevaliers*, for long devoted to anything but chivalrous uses.

We mounted and stood on the outside platform, far above the walls, high above the houses. These looked like a cluster of small whitewashed tenements, carefully sheltered from all the fresh air of heaven.

But the view beyond was amazing, and at sunset must be infinitely gorgeous. We were surrounded by reflections. At our feet was the canal that stretches right down to the port, and beyond that port lay the broad blue waters of the Mediterranean, shimmering in the sunshine. Here it was that the galères of St. Louis assembled in that memorable year of 1247. All down the canal they extended in a long line, waiting the King's pleasure and a fair wind to set sail. As we looked we imagined the solemn pageantry of the embarkation: heard the acclamations of the crowd, saw monks and prelates assemble on the royal deck. Once more rose on the air, in mighty unison, the *Veni Creator*. We saw the fleet glide majestically away, the frail, dignified figure of the King standing apart on his vessel, his face turned heavenwards.

All this in imagination. What we really saw to-day, were a few barges moored under the shadows of the walls, the blue

sky reflected upon the surface of the water. In the distance was the harbour with its crowd of picturesque fishing-boats. Here and there the banks were lined with pyramids of salt, white and glistening in the sunshine. Below us were the walls, and yet below them the whitewashed town. All round the walls was a wide walk. Beyond the walls, stretched the plains bare and desolate, yet full of subdued tone. Far off, the sea melted away in the horizon in a broad band of light.

We went back to our déjeuner, and ordered a conveyance to take us to the port. It arrived in due time, the best the inn possessed: a rude cart with a hard seat for two behind and a hard seat for two in front: but to get to the back seat the front seat had to be removed with ceremony. Once in, you were a prisoner.

It was one of the pleasantest drives in existence, and made us feel very far out of the world. The breeze was of the freshest, the sun poured its brilliancy upon everything; never were such blue skies.

For three miles, all down the road, we followed the canal, men here and there dragging it with nets and reaping their daily harvest of fish. We passed gigantic salt works; great pyramids of salt, that in the far distance might easily have been mistaken for a military encampment.

Arrived at the harbour the scene was enchanting. Nothing could be more striking and picturesque. Amongst the fishing-fleet there was quiet stir and movement, many of the vessels were of fair size, and we stood long and watched them going in and out between the piers. A most primitive, most delightful, most out-of-the-world settlement.

In summer, people come here for the season, and take lodgings or put up at the hotel. Life must pass as a dream if they have any romance in them, any sense of the beautiful and the sublime.

For nothing could be more beautiful or more sublime than the blue waters of the Mediterranean as they stretched before us in all their vivid colouring. We had never in our lives seen them as we saw them to-day. A myriad tints played around; and not one but a thousand suns seemed shining and glittering upon their surface. The heavens were radiant: nature seemed

almost wild and delirious with beauty. And yet, looking upon that sea, there was a calmness, a serenity about it which touched the spirit with the most soothing, restful influence. We walked in a rainbow atmosphere: could have sat for ever at the end of the pier gazing upon the scene. On the opposite side rose the lighthouse, a tall white column against the background of blue sky.

The whole place was deserted, fishermen excepted; hotels and houses were all closed for the winter. Nothing moved but the dancing waters and the flashing sunshine, and the boats that glided in and out with white or brown sails set. It was not earth but paradise. To pass days and weeks under such influence would be as delightful as it would be terrible in Aigues-Mortes: the one paradise, the other purgatory.

Yet Aigues-Mortes as we see has had a great and historical past. It was favoured of kings, flourished commercially, waxed rich, was admirably placed for commanding the trade between France and the East, possessed a thousand possibilities and advantages. But its glory has departed. It sits lone and solitary in its mediæval atmosphere: a dead city entombed in its own walls. Other cities have risen around, flourished and prospered; Aigues-Mortes lies in a proud and dignified retirement: a mediæval monument in the midst of a desert-like plain; a wonder of the past. Even from where we sat at the end of the pier its distant walls were visible. No crowd thronged above them; no eager faces; no acclamations filled the air. Its day was over, probably for ever.

We found it difficult to tear ourselves away from all the magic of the scene, but time and tide and trains wait for no man. Our driver was discovered making merry with the sailors on board one of the fishing-smacks, drinking absinthe or something equally acceptable. A toast was being given as we went up to them. There was a great *tringuing* of glasses and then a shout of "Vive la République!" like the short-sighted grown-up children they were, who knew not what they were saying.

Our driver disembarked. We climbed into the cart, the fishermen wished us a good-natured, friendly good-day and "Bon voyage," and away we jogged and jolted.

"If you came here in the summer, it would be a much

gayer, very different scene, and you would enjoy it far more," said our driver, little dreaming how perfect the experience had been, leaving behind it an ineffaceable impression. Open houses, a crowd, would have spoilt it all. As it was, we felt we had discovered an unknown Eden. And to the world at large it is unknown, unfrequented ; a corner of the world, where the shadows of the clouds are far more numerous than the shadows of men and women ; and where at sunset the fine outlines of the fishing-fleet stand out in a background that is all golden and purple, full of rich and changing colours.

The drive back was delightful, and we wished it would last for hours ; almost wished it would last for ever. Earth, sea and sky steeped us in dreams and visions ; a lotus-land in which the Canaanite had no part ; where all was peace and harmony and beauty, and life and youth went on eternally ; where perpetual love reigned, and the glass ever ran and the harp ever sounded. Not an existence of the senses, but of the soul.

## CHAPTER XI.

Madame takes an air bath—"That meddlesome Henri Roger"—Madame perplexed—H. C. protests—Quoting Lady Maria—Henri Roger—In the moonlit cloisters—Custodian alarmed—Roger's hopes and aspirations—A last look round—The matchless Rhône—Silent streets—A stirrup-cup—Good-bye—Avignon—The Hôtel d'Europe—Paradise after Purgatory—Madame Ville—Admirable hostess—Avignon neglected—A tradition—Religious persecutions—Pont St. Bénézet—Popes of Avignon—Bertrand de Grotte—Gorgeous pageants—Palace of the popes—Petrarch and Rienzi—Joanna of Naples—Trial and acquittal—L'Isle Sonnante—Villeneuve—Fort St. André—Remarkable ruins—The hospital—Picturesque sisters—Tomb of Pope Innocent VI.—Abbey of St. André—The nun—Cell of the Man with the Iron Mask—Nun's history—Under the moonlight—Madame Ville keeps vigil—Pierre.

THE storm and tempest of the Camargue had passed away. We found the hotel reposing under blue skies, basking in sunshine, a delightful image of peace and plenty, harmony and comfort. It was the outside of the cup and the platter, the broad phylactery of the Pharisee.

Madame was taking an air bath at her door, and made us a deep reverence. Madame was punctiliously polite. How could you find fault with any one who invariably behaved as a queen and treated you as a favoured courtier? Even in her bureau she sat as a monarch upon her throne, and made out her bills as one dispensing blessings upon her clientèle.

"Eh, bien, messieurs," she said, as we returned her curtsy with becoming bows. "Eh, bien, messieurs, what think you of the Camargue?"

"Madame, it is a remarkable spot."

"Well worth a visit, n'est-ce-pas, monsieur? Your morning has not been lost?"

"On the contrary, madame, we have had some delightful experiences."

"And Les Saintes Maries—is it not quaint and primitive? Did the people throw stones at you? It is so amusing. One gentleman staying here came back with a black eye. He was quite charmed at what he called their playfulness and originality."

"Madame, we had no stone-throwing or imprecations. The people seemed more inclined for a game at hide-and-seek. As you say, they are playful and original."

"And the church, and the curé—you saw the curé? He invited you to déjeuner, probably; told you all about the pilgrimages. You will surely stay for a pilgrimage, or return for one."

"Hardly that, madame. The description we heard was so vivid that we have already seen one—mentally. We also had a very intelligent fellow-passenger, who told us about many things."

"Je parie that it was that meddlesome Henri Roger," returned madame, with the smallest suspicion of a frown. "He has a great deal to say upon every subject, and what he does not know, he invents. Pay no attention to him, messieurs; do not be guided by him. He would give even ME a bad name, if you listened long enough to him."

Madame drew herself up three inches, and almost lost her balance.

"You do him injustice, madame. He certainly said your commissariat department left something to be——"

"He is a frightful gossip," interrupted madame; "and it follows that he must be a terrible story-teller. That young man will gradually work his way into a leading position, and one of these days will turn the town upside down. Those who live will see it. But the flamingoes, messieurs, you saw them?"

"Numbers, madame. The sky was black with them."

Madame raised her eyebrows and looked puzzled. It was one thing for her to assert that they were there; another to hear they had been seen.

"And the wild horses, and the storks, and the elephants, madame," we continued—"whole droves of them."

"*Elephants!*" cried madame. "Did you say ELEPHANTS, monsieur? But I never heard of ELEPHANTS in the Camargue. Surely you are mistaken? You mean cows?"

"Madame, you must yourself visit the Camargue. And we promise that when you see the sky black with flamingoes, you will find a drove of elephants on the plains beneath them. Monsieur Henri Roger—since such is his name—even hinted that elephants were good eating, and might with advantage be added to madame's commissariat——"

"Qu'est-ce que c'est?—à l'instant," cried madame to another inaudible voice from an invisible personage. And with a "Pardon, messieurs," she marched superbly down the passage and disappeared into regions impenetrable to folk who had not the entrée to her court.

She would have beguiled us into a longer stay and more excursions; but as H. C. said, human nature had its limits of forbearance. He was commencing to feel every symptom of what the ancients called the wasting disease, the moderns, decline. The owner of the tart shop was beginning to dream of retiring upon a fortune; but H. C. declared that tarts were worse than nothing: there was no nourishment in pastry; it did not build up the system like good roast beef.

It was useless quoting Lady Maria; we could only protest feebly, for, secretly, we rather agreed with him. Had we been in St. Rémy, we might have made an arrangement to board with Mademoiselle Charlotte; but we were not there, and in Arles there was no such large-hearted philanthropist. So we decided that our stay in Arles must come to an end. And we really now knew the place by heart, with all its treasures and attractions.

"We must go," said H. C. pathetically, emphatically. "If we stay here any longer I shall become a candidate for my own museum. 'A nineteenth-century poet: fossilised by starvation.' How would it read? Or you might label me: 'A mummy discovered in the town of Arles. Genuine Egyptian antiquity, 2000 years before Cleopatra!' It would enormously attract no doubt. Still, as I cling to life a little longer, we will bid Arles a long farewell."

Sensible advice, and the next morning we packed up, took

an impressive congé of madame—so glad were we to get away—and departed for Avignon.

Yet in Arles we left much behind that we had learned to love: including the contents of the museum, which H. C. had not yet succeeded in purchasing by fair means or foul.

"But I have laid the foundation," he said, "and shall get it in time. My offer will gradually filter into the brains of the town powers. I give my proposal a year to make its way; then I shall return and close with them. Our fame is made—mere fortune may come or not as it pleases. I despise filthy lucre."

Our fellow-traveller to the Camargue, Henri Roger, had been as good as his word, and on our last night in Arles, after our Barmecide feast had digested, he had called and gone with us round the town, showing us various wonderful old works that we could never have found unescorted.

As we stood long gazing at the west front of St. Trophimus, we heard a jingling of metal, and turning, saw that he had drawn two large keys out of his pocket.

"The keys of the cloisters," he said, in answer to our look. "I thought you would like to visit them by moonlight."

"But how did you get them?"

He laughed. "I should like to see the keeper or any one else denying me anything I had set my mind on," he replied. "I don't know how or why it is, but men twice my age, and with five times my power, give in to me. I suppose it is force of character, or a determined will, or mesmeric influence. I don't know; but whatever it is, my mother had the same influence before me. Perhaps it is some Norwegian power that hasn't come down to these southern races."

We went up the narrow turning until we came to the ecclesiastical nook and the cloister entrance.

"Is it not a fine old doorway?" cried our companion. "I delight in all these nooks and corners of Arles, all the splendid antiquities and Roman remains. Many an hour on moonlight nights do I spend wandering about from one rare monument to another; and wandering alone—for I can get no one to share my enthusiasm."

Then applying his open sesame to the lock, the heavy door



CLOISTER DOORWAY : ARLES,



rolled back on its hinges and we passed into the magic precincts. Henri Roger rolled to the door, which closed with a noise that reverberated through the arched passages like thunder. We were prisoners. Out came the blind old custodian, shuffling down in consternation, more agitated than a molested owl.

"Who invades these sacred precincts at this hour of the night?" cried the startled man. "With what power or by what authority is anyone here?"

"Peace, peace, good François," said our companion. "Calm your fears. We are friends, not foes."

"Ah, c'est vous, Monsieur Roger!" cried the relieved guardian. "Idiot that I must be not to have guessed it! Who but you could gain entrance here, and play me such a turn? For a moment I thought of burglars and destroyers, and am all trembling."

"Good François, take this as a return for your fright," we said, offering a piece of silver. "And drink to our health, including M. Roger, whether you choose coffee or cognac."

"And good François, leave us in peace," added Henri Roger. "We would be alone at this witching hour in these ghostly passages. Shuffle back to the bosom of your family, and be at ease. When we depart, we will safely lock up."

"Bien sur, Monsieur Roger?" in nervous accents.

"You know me," returned Roger. "I need say no more."

And the poor, blind, pitiful custodian, murmuring, "Allons, donc! Bien le bonsoir, messieurs," shuffled round two sides of the cloisters, entered his abode, and locked his door for the night.

For a whole hour we paced those moonlit cloisters, revelling in the atmosphere of bygone centuries. Henri Roger opened his heart to us; told us all his plans and thoughts for the future, all his hopes and ambitions. There was something singularly attractive about him. He was frank and ingenuous to a degree, full of life and animation; handsome withal, with a noble, upright expression; the large, truthful blue eyes of the Norwegian; a brow full of thought and sincerity. He seemed to have studied a multitude of subjects, and was enthusiastic upon all.

"At this rate," we said, "you will some day make a noise in the world: will leave Arles, and carve out a great future for yourself. Paris will probably be your scene of action."

"I admit that I have dreams," he laughed; "but to accomplish them will be difficult. I have no friends in the great world to push me on, and no money to speak of to make up for want of interest."

"Energy overcomes all obstacles," we returned; "and one day when you are President of the Republic, we will come and stay with you and remind you of this hour and prophecy."

"Hush!" he whispered. "Tell it not, but I would far rather be King—or see a true King reigning. I don't believe in a Republic."

"And you a Norwegian!"

"It seems strange, doesn't it?" he said, half troubled. "Treacherous towards my country and people, who are all democrats. But I am not a democrat. Democracy is the curse of the world, and is at the bottom of most of its evil. That is my fixed conviction, and I shall never change. All the same," he laughed, "if they wish to make me President of the Republic by-and-by, when I am grey and wise, and have a knowledge of men and know how to rule them, why I would accept the responsibility for the sake of the good I might do."

Our shadows mingled with the shadows of the pillars thrown on the pavement, as we walked to and fro in the moonlight. Silence reigned. Not a sound, within or without, disturbed the air, save the echoes of our light footsteps. It was as Henri Roger had said, a ghostly experience. The shades of monks, dead and gone centuries ago, seemed to lurk in the dark corners. We stood and listened and almost fancied we heard rustle of cloak and cowl and echo of sandalled feet. And all the time the moon rose higher in the sky pursuing her noiseless way and flooding the world with cold mysterious light.

The church bell or some other bell rang out the hour. We started to find it already so late. With a long last look around, we turned to leave.

"Roger," we said, before the vision faded, "remember this

night and our conversation. If anything is ever needed to spur on your efforts and ambition, think upon our prophecy. Some day you will be great."

He grasped our hand. "I must have known you a dozen years," he said, "not a dozen hours. You have entered into my life, and I shall never again be able to separate you from it. Cruel to have met, if only to part so soon."

The great door rolled open; we passed out, and it closed upon us. Roger, true to his word, double-turned the lock and pocketed the keys.

We went round to the Theatre, all its pillars and fragments standing out in the brilliant moonlight. Still more impressive was the Amphitheatre, and Roger, who seemed to possess a magic key that fitted all doors, or a secret charm that opened them, led the way up to the tower. Here we looked down upon a sleeping world bathed in moonlight. We imagined the plains beyond, the far-off sea. Not a sound disturbed the silence: silent the stars above us and the sailing moon.

Then, as the needle to the pole, we found our way down and passed through the lights and shadows of the narrow streets to the banks of the flowing river—the matchless Rhône. It was our last impression of Arles.

"Here I always wind up my night's walk," said Henri Roger. "To me there is an attraction about the Rhône I cannot describe. As I watch the water flowing past in its mighty strength, I gain fresh energy and courage. Thoughts take form and shape, plans seem to ripen, ambitions become possible. Many and many a time I have leant over this parapet, and watched the water by the hour together, lost in dreams. The bells have tolled midnight, and one and two, and I have often gone off only when light was breaking in the east. Luckily I can do with very little sleep, or with no sleep at all. Now, whenever I come here, I shall think of to-night."

He went back with us to the hotel through the silent streets. Every café was closed; at the inn there was nothing but a sleepy porter to open to us. Madame had left her throne and departed, taking her keys with her. They were reposing under her pillow. We could not "Drink hael!" at parting.

"But you will see us off to-morrow—or rather this morning,"

we said. "And we will quaff a stirrup-cup and wish each other God-speed."

He promised, and with a handshake in which there was nothing French, went his way. Some hours later he turned up again: and we drained the stirrup-cup to the dregs, and put it down light of wine but heavy with good wishes. Then he accompanied us to the station, and our last vision of the platform was blotted out by a waving hat that held all the good wishes of the stirrup-cup; and a fair, frank face, full of life and hope, full of sincere expression, capable of faithful friendship, gifted with sterling worth.

The train went its way. Leaving Arles, in the distance we saw rising the ruins of Mont Major, and thought of the good Provençale who was to offer up prayers for the conversion of the heretic. Beyond were the heights of Les Baux, where Grim the owl was still languishing in captivity, little heeding that before many weeks were over he would travel over land and sea and find his destination in the Zoological Gardens of London. We could not see St. Rémy down in the plains, but imagination stepped in, and once more we were examining the work of the genius in gold thread, and were drinking the incomparable Vin de Provence in Mademoiselle Charlotte's dining-room, poured out by that lady with a generous hand and a delicate grace, and *tringuing* as a token of eternal friendship. The pleasant vision passed away as we reached Tarascon, where Martha had done battle with the dragon. Once more we crossed the Rhône and passed into the plains where once the Popes held sway.

It was impossible to approach ancient Avignon, so remarkable in history, so full of dramas and tragedies, of mighty secrets, jealousies, ambitions, plots and counterplots, without a certain emotion. Yet nearer, there rose up above the ancient walls of the town the outlines of the vast palace of the Popes. Still above and beyond them, the tower and spire of the cathedral.

The train entered the modern station. Few passengers alighted, and the omnibus was soon rattling up the broad boulevard in which there was nothing picturesque but the trees. Then turning into the narrow streets it finally drew up in an old square at the Hôtel d'Europe.

After the inn at Arles we were suddenly plunged into

paradise. The hotel had existed for generations: was one of those dignified, old-fashioned houses, where Royalty had been accustomed to descend, and round which a courtly atmosphere still clung. The rooms were large and lofty, some of them furnished with upholstery of the Empire period, others dating back to times more picturesque and in still better taste.

Madame Ville was the perfection of a good, generous and amiable hostess. Here, we felt, would be no Barmecide banquets. The man-servant specially told off to wait upon our rooms was worth his weight in gold. Old and grey-headed, he had served in the hotel since the days of his youth, and moved with as little noise as a ghost, anticipating every want. In the mornings there was no rude awakening by a discharge of artillery at the door; but gradually one became pleasantly conscious that a shadow was flitting about the room, arranging everything with the art of an experienced valet, and then a gentle voice murmured: "*Monsieur, il est sept heures. Le bain de monsieur est préparé.*" Then followed a slight conversation put forward as a delicate means of banishing sleep.

"He is indeed an admirable man," said madame, "and is my right hand. I cannot remember the place without him: and all my best clientèle insist upon having him to wait upon them when they visit me. But our great days are over," added madame with a sigh.

Certainly there was a slight feeling about the hotel of a past greater than the present. If the house thereby gained in dignity and repose, it probably painfully felt the change in a diminished ledger. There was no other evidence of change. Everything was perfectly appointed and a liberal hand ruled the dining-room.

"Why this alteration, madame? Your hotel is one of the most comfortable and best appointed in Europe. We have felt at home here from the moment we first entered your hospitable doors. All the world should flock to you. They would do so, if they knew how delightful you make a sojourn within your gates."

"As to the appointments of the hotel," returned madame, "we have been accustomed to receive and entertain the first people in Europe. If my house had not been well appointed

this could never have continued. And as long as I live, I will make no change. I recognise only one way of keeping an hotel. As to the falling off, it is due to these fast trains. In the old days every one going north or south broke their journey at Avignon. The hotel was always full to overflowing. The highest in the land descended here; all the crowned heads, if any passed through the town. People arranged to meet here, spend a week together; it was a series of picnics and drives and parties of pleasure. Every one was charmed, every one easily pleased. It is not your nouveau riche but your ancienne noblesse who gives no trouble and is never exacting. Now, monsieur, every one rushes through by the train rapide, the train de luxe. Every one is anxious to reach his journey's end, and Avignon is neglected."

No doubt madame had reason. Railways have much to answer for, and have not been an unmixed good. Some of the best out-of-the-way nooks and corners of earth, small paradises, are now unvisited and forgotten.

But Avignon is not an out-of-the-way nook, and there is no excuse for neglect. It stands out boldly and prominently in the pages of history. Nature has given it one of the finest sites in the world, and the view from the upper walks has scarcely its equal. The Rhône here is magnificent. Not far off, the Durance throws its troubled waters into the larger stream; and up the Durance there are delightful excursions, though few profit by them. But those who live amidst them have a strange and strong love for the banks of the Durance, and will tell you that no other river owns such beauty.

Unlike many other towns in the Lower Valley of the Rhône, Avignon has preserved few signs of Roman occupation. And yet it was great long before the days of the Romans.

It goes back to the Stone Age, when the Rocher des Doms was surrounded by water, and a small colony of fishermen dwelt here, chiefly to capture the well-laden rafts that floated down the river. Gradually the place grew in importance, until Cæsar cast his covetous grasp upon it. The Romans added much to its power and prosperity, and it became one of the great cities of the world.

Yet few Roman remains exist, partly because it has been

often attacked and pillaged, especially in the wars with the Saracens. Here may be seen a Roman arcade, there the remains of a hippodrome; here and there Roman foundations have been discovered, Roman pavements and mosaics, fragments of statues, a few coins; but nothing more.

Avignon was one of the first towns to accept Christianity. The tradition is that after the Ascension the Jews took Lazarus, Martha and Mary, their servant Marcella, and one of the seventy disciples, and placing them in a boat without oars or sails, sent them out to sea. This richly-laden bark was miraculously guided to Marseilles; the whole province immediately became Christian, and in the year 70, a son of Simon the Cyrenean, who had worked with St. Paul, became bishop of Avignon. This first bishop was St. Rufus. Darkness followed light, and he suffered martyrdom.

Little is known of the succeeding ages until Constantine re-established the churches, and placed the long-persecuted clergy on a safe basis. He it was who reconstructed the cathedral of Notre-Dame-des-Doms, but of that edifice nothing remains but the porch. The greater part of the present building dates from the twelfth century.

Avignon was to have no peace. Religious persecution ceased only to give place to secular disturbances. She became a prey to the barbarous tribes. The Goths and Vandals devastated her. The petty kings who divided Gaul amongst them, came down upon her and made her pay their war expenses. She fell under the dominion of the Kings of Burgundy. The sons of Clotaire pillaged her; the Lombards made continual incursions. When the Saracens invaded her, Charles Martel came to her relief, but too late; the Mussulman was in possession. So the town was besieged and the siege went on for a year, when the town yielded, the Saracens were all massacred, and blood ran like water through the streets. One of them is still called the Rue Rouge for that reason.

Peace re-established, Avignon flourished once more. Later on she again fell under the dominion of Burgundy; then passed to the Counts of Provence and of Toulouse; and finally became a Republic, which lasted from 1135 to 1251.

It was during this short republic that the wonderful bridge

was built, the Pont St. Bénézet, with its centre chapel overhanging the waters. Tradition assigns the building of the bridge to a miracle, through the medium of St. Bénézet, a young shepherd watching his flocks. In due time the bridge with its nineteen arches was finished; one of the finest specimens of the architecture of the period. The chapel was dedicated to St. Nicholas, and here St. Bénézet's remains were interred, in 1184: and here they remained until 1672, when they were transferred to the Monastery of the Célestins.

The bridge is now a ruin. Only four arches remain, but one of these bears the chapel.

Louis XIV. was said to have destroyed the bridge, yet did not do so. It was attacked at various periods, but never by Louis XIV. In its fragmentary state it forms one of Avignon's most interesting relics.

In 1309 began the reign of the popes in Avignon. Philippe le Bel had quarrelled with Pope Boniface VIII., and the latter threatened to become a serious thorn in the French king's side. Then Philip boldly conceived the idea of taking the papacy into his own hands. His wish was to have a French pope, living in France. Casting about in his mind he bethought him of his greatest enemy, Bertrand de Grotte, Archbishop of Bordeaux. Meeting him one day in a forest: "Archbishop," said the king, "I can make you pope if I choose, upon your promising to accord me six favours."

Upon which the archbishop fell on his knees and cried: "Monseigneur, I now see that you love me more than any other living man, and would return good for evil. Command, and I will obey you."

So the archbishop was elected pope, under the name of Clement V., and in 1309 took up his abode in Avignon.

In the time of the popes Avignon was said to be the gayest and most lively town in Europe. The very air sparkled with animation, it was nothing but a succession of fêtes, one gala day following another. Processions, pilgrimages, streets decorated with flowers and flags—such was the ordinary life.

The Rhône was a river of gorgeous pageants. Cardinals in scarlet robes were frequently seen arriving in their picturesque galères. Everywhere in the town the papal soldiers were



PONT ST. BÉNÉDET.



visible. From many a house came the sound of lace-making, the spinning of gold thread for chasubles, the tap-tap of the small hammers of those who made barettas. In the air was ever a clashing of bells mingling with the sound of drum and fife. The people danced for very joy; danced day and night on the famous bridge, whilst the fresh air blew about them and the rapid river flowed beneath. It claimed no victims; the people were happy and danced on for ever. Life was too short for them, not too long or too sad.

Such was Avignon, says tradition, in the days of its popes. But if the people were happy, without thought for the morrow, it was not quite so with the sovereign pontiffs who ruled over them.

The successors of Clement V. learned wisdom by experience. What the King of France had once done, he might do again. Having established the papal throne in Avignon for his pleasure, he might for the same reason bring their reign to an end.

The popes preferred Avignon to Rome, which was in a dangerous and unsettled state between the Guelphs and the Ghibelins and other internal warfares, and they had no wish to go back to be made the shuttlecock of contending parties. It behoved them to build walls and raise fortifications, and erect a palace that should be a wonder of the world and a stronghold against the enemy, if enemy came. Clement V. had been content to inhabit the Monastery of the Dominicans, a body of select preachers specially chosen by the church: whereby she showed her wisdom. He had dispensed with any great pomp and ceremony in the matter of abode.

But his successors were of another mind, and at different periods raised that marvellous structure the vastness of which may still be measured, though much of its pomp and all its glory have departed.

No better site could exist for a palace. On the left bank of the Rhône rose this almost impregnable rock, and here they would build their palace with walls of amazing thickness. Town-walls with gates and towers should still further protect them.

All was done, and much of it remains to this day. The

famous city of the popes still bears witness to that mighty fourteenth-century sway. Every pope in his turn altered and added to the work of his predecessor. John XXII. began it. Benedict XII. undid all John's work and really laid the foundation of the vast palace that more than anything else proclaims the wealth and power of the papacy. Clement VI., Innocent VI., Urban V. all added to the wonderful world around them. Each prided himself upon building his own palace, and not living in that of his predecessor. In the end four palaces reared their heads under one roof, a magnificent mediæval monument.

Then came Gregory XI., who did nothing. In Avignon the reign of the popes was over: and in 1377 he went back to Rome. The four popes who built the chief part of the palace were all French. It was, said Froissart, the most beautiful and the strongest house in the world. In the seventeenth century it went through much mutilation, and in 1812 was turned into barracks.

The reign of the popes in Avignon has been called the second Babylonish captivity by Petrarch, but it was certainly a very willing and brilliant condition of things. A time, too, of great activity and effort, of stores of mental and physical energy.

It was evidently thought that Avignon would be the Papal seat for ever. The court became notorious for luxury and dissipation; pleasure and self-gratification ruled the hour.

Amongst the illustrious came Petrarch; and here his friend Cola Rienzi, the once famous and formidable Tribune of Rome, was imprisoned. His dungeon was in the Tour de Trouillas, where he languished for five years. Otherwise he was not badly treated: good food was supplied him, and books for reading and study. But to the proud chief of the Capitol, at whose word men had once trembled, this loss of freedom must have been as galling as that later captivity to Napoleon in St. Helena. His life was spared and his imprisonment finally brought to an end through the influence of Petrarch. They were close friends, and travelled long together.

The earnestness of Rienzi's character did not forsake him in his downfall. He still pursued the serious reading that had

been his favourite pastime in the days of his power. The study of the Bible, the history of the ancient Romans, the books of Livy—these were ever in his hands.

That fourteenth century was full of remarkable episodes and events for Avignon. The popes, ruling the world, would not let grass grow in the streets of the papal city. Matters of great moment, both religious and political, were decided within the palace walls. Secret consistories were ever taking place—and who or what can be more secret than Rome? If walls tell tales, surely the Vatican is the exception that proves the rule.

The popes of Avignon asserted their right to universal domination. John XXII., first of the alien popes, waged fierce war against Louis de Bavière, Emperor of Germany. Nicholas V., antipope at Rome, crowned Louis, defying John. We have seen how the latter could be a bitter enemy. He captured Nicholas, brought him to Avignon, placed a rope round his neck, publicly pardoned him, and then threw him into prison until his death.

Benedict XII. carried on the quarrel with Louis. Clement VI. excommunicated him. He died, and his successor, Charles IV. of Austria, was as devoted to papal supremacy as Louis had been opposed to it.

Then came Joanna of Naples, Queen of the two Sicilies and Countess of Provence, therefore owner of Avignon.

This august lady at the age of twenty was said to have caused her husband, Andrew of Hungary, to be assassinated, in order that she might marry Louis of Tarente: a lady, if this were true, worthy of being a Borgia. To the pope at Avignon came Joan, demanding the necessary dispensations.

She was ravishingly beautiful, and arrived with pomp and ceremony up the broad waters of the Rhône. Eight cardinals in their scarlet robes went to meet her. Though only twenty years of age her beauty and marvellous intellect had brought the attention of the whole world upon her. Joan was received by the cardinals under a dais of cloth of gold worked with jewels that flashed in the sunlight. More resplendent still, it was remarked, was the dazzling beauty of this fair woman.

In this manner she was escorted through the streets. Some

of the crowd everywhere assembled fell on their knees before the vision, others looked on in silence.

Many a pulse beat faster as a glance from those wonderful eyes pierced the chain armour of his heart : and who shall assert that Clement VI. escaped the charm : for though pope, he was still human. At any rate, he accorded her all the favours she demanded ; and as a return, she made him a present of the town of Avignon. It was pretended that she received eighty thousand florins for the town, but the money was never paid.

Not a word was said about the assassination, and this fourteenth-century Mary Stuart was free to marry Louis of Tarente.

Louis of Hungary, however, brother of the murdered Andrew, determined to avenge the crime. He came down upon the kingdom of Naples, seized it, and exacted that the Queen should be brought up for judgment. The pope was compelled to act, and very unwillingly summoned Joanna before the papal tribunal.

Again she arrived with pomp and ceremony up the broad river. Again eight cardinals in their scarlet robes went down to meet her with the daïs of cloth of gold and flashing jewels ; and again she made a royal progress through the town, captivating all hearts. No fear showed she ; no pallor of the cheek or faltering glance. Had she been condemned the town would have risen in revolt to save her. Executed, the pope himself might have trembled for his life.

She was her own defender ; pronounced a learned discourse in purest Latin ; and her logic was so subtle, her arguments were so unanswerable, that her judges rose up in a body and declared her innocent. The verdict was carried beyond the walls, and the town rang with enthusiastic acclamations a hundred times repeated ; brilliant fêtes were organised for many days ; Joan departed in triumph, and Louis of Hungary made up his mind that he would never again go to war with a beautiful woman. For if a woman is both beautiful and unscrupulous, she will get the better even of his Holiness.\*

\* It has also been declared on good authority that Joan had nothing to do with the murder of her husband ; that she was, on the contrary, very fond of him ; and was herself as gentle and lovable as she was lovely. Let us place ourselves on the side of those who held her guiltless.

During the whole reign of the popes in Avignon, the Romans endeavoured to get them back to the Capitol. With a great part of the people the Babylonish captivity found no favour. They wanted their popes back in the Vatican, were continually sending an embassy to Avignon, pleading for a return.

Petrarch and Rienzi arrived together: two notable envoys. Clement VI. received them with all honour: reduced the recurring period of the popes' jubilee from a century to fifty years, thereby immensely enriching Rome: but declined to leave Avignon.

Petrarch and Rienzi were little satisfied with the result of their mission. Rienzi determined to make Rome independent of the papal power, and by his own strength alone, this famous Tribune, son of a poor innkeeper, brought about the Republic. Intoxicated with success, detested for his pride, attacked by the nobles he had so humiliated, abandoned by the people, who were ever the greatest of turncoats, deserted on all sides, he fled to Prague.

Charles IV. of Austria, the pope's great friend and ally, immediately delivered him into the hands of Clement. He entered Avignon with a certain amount of pomp, surrounded by archers: and no figure was more erect and fearless, no step prouder, no eye glanced out more boldly, than that of the fallen Tribune.

Death would have been the end of it, but for the prayers of Petrarch and the death of Clement VI. In the cell of the tower one may still see the marks of the chain in the vaulting, where, it is said, Rienzi passed his five years of captivity.

Then Innocent VI., reflecting that though he had attacked the temporal power of the popes, he had never waged war against their spiritual supremacy, sent him to Rome under Cardinal Albornoze, with the title of Roman Senator, there to put down fresh rebellions. But Rienzi again lost his discretion, made fresh enemies, and in a riot was killed by a follower of the Colonnas. Thus died one of the greatest men of his time.

Another act favourable to France the popes were able to accomplish.

Towards the end of 1350, Jean le Bon, King of France grew angry and dissatisfied with Humbert the Irresolute, who had ceded to him the rich Province of the Dauphiné; then, repenting, wished to take it back again.

John appealed to Pope Clement. The latter espoused his cause; invited Humbert to his court, represented the fleeting nature of all earthly possessions, dilated upon the joys of a religious life, and persuaded him to take orders: first as a bishop, next as Patriarch of Alexandria. The Dauphiné, loveliest of provinces, became irrevocably united to France: a very pearl in its crown.

Thus Avignon in the fourteenth century enclosed within its walls all the elements of a powerful and mighty kingdom. Princes and crowned heads went to and fro in homage to the papal throne. The cardinals, of whom most were French, did not neglect their own affairs. They too lived in great pomp, and built themselves strong castles with battlemented towers. The place was overrun with every species of religious order, and monks were said to be as plentiful as soldiers: a strange medley of conflicting elements.

Streets were ever full of life and movement. The inhabitants alone numbered 80,000. Convents and monasteries sprang up in every direction; churches without number. Three hundred church bells were for ever more or less ringing; the air was full of sound; and Avignon was called *l'Isle Sonnante*.

All this formed the bright side of Avignon. Peace and prosperity reigned; she had all that heart could desire; far too much, it may be, in the way of luxury and self-indulgence. No man's hand was against her.

But there were, nevertheless, occasional visitations beyond her control. The Rhône and the Durançe would overflow their banks and spread devastation far and wide; famines arose, and there was no Egypt and no Joseph to supply them with corn. Several times the plague decimated the country, on one occasion, it is recorded, claiming 100,000 victims.

Against this they could do nothing. They could not fight with shadows; could not stay the famine, or the rising waters, or the black plague. But so lighthearted were they that the evil once past, they quickly returned to their songs and laughter



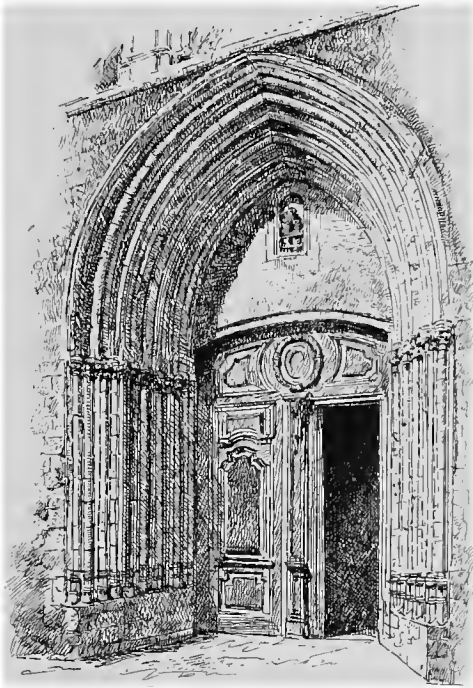
RUINS OF MONASTERY, VILLENEUVE.



and *sans-souci*. The mercury of their temperament would rise to fair weather at the smallest parting of the clouds.

“Sur le pont d’Avignon  
Tout le monde y passe.”

So rang the rhyme. And spring and summer, autumn and winter, they danced the hours away.



DOORWAY OF CHURCH IN VILLENUEVE.

But the popes possessed more than Avignon.

On the right bank of the Rhône was the picturesque and flourishing town of Villeneuve ; high up on the rock the splendid and impregnable Fort St. André with its castellated walls and magnificent gateway.

The town has become a dead city, sad and desolate, but most interesting to visit.

The church still exists, with its fine doorway and remarkable

cloisters. It dates from the fourteenth century and was built by the nephew of the first pope, John XXII. In the cloisters there reigned a semi-darkness, throwing over them an air of mystery. Men at work seemed to have turned them into a carpenter's shop.

Not far off was the ruin of a Carthusian monastery that had once played a great part in life. It was of great extent, rich and powerful. All ranks and conditions of men retired here from the world, and the popes treated them with favour and indulgence.

It is now nothing but a picturesque fragment, with crumbling walls and broken staircases, where weeds and creepers find a foothold. Here and there a nook has been turned into a small dwelling-house. In one of them lived a woman, who suddenly opened her window and asked if she could be of any use to us.

As it happened, we wanted her elevation for a photograph, and asked permission to enter. The staircase was circular, ancient and dark; her little room, no larger than a good-sized closet, might almost have been a cell in days gone by. We looked round for the ghost of a monk: an old Chartreux in cowl and cloak, ready to take his place in the little cemetery hard by; or a young novice still hesitating between the world and the cloister, half doubting if the latter is as perfect an existence as he had thought it.

But there lurked no suspicion of a ghost in any one of the corners. The atmosphere of the room, with its rush-bottomed chairs and ugly little pictures in black frames decorating the walls, was too hopelessly modern and commonplace to admit of ghostly shades.

Nothing ghostly was there about the rosy-faced, substantial owner.

In a corner stood the stove, on which a bubbling pot-au-feu sent up a savoury steam. From the open window we had a vision of Gothic arches and broken steps and crumbling walls; one of the loveliest of ruins.

"Monsieur is much taken with the view," said the woman. "It does not interest me; I think it triste; no life or movement; but it suits me to live here. I get my room for almost



RUINS OF MONASTERY.



nothing, and the thick walls make it cool in summer and warm in winter. It was a great place in the days of the monks, and they and the Benedictines had it all their own way. I daresay they enjoyed themselves in their own fashion. On n'fait pas maigre tous les jours!"

The good woman looked as though she made no exception even of Friday.

On the other side the way, very near to the ruins, was the hospital, with its sunny court, where vines trailed over trellis work, and on the pavement one traced the shadows of the Sisters as they flitted to and fro in their black dresses and large white caps.

Attached to it was a museum, and some of its pictures were ancient and admirable, and some were poor. Here also was the fourteenth-century Gothic tomb of Pope Innocent VI.: a magnificent specimen of tabernacle work with delicately carved niches. For long this tomb was in the ruins of the Carthusian monastery, where it did humble duty as a general store cupboard to a poor worker in the vineyards. Pope Innocent himself had founded this Monastery du Val de Bénédiction, and his tomb was fast going to ruin amidst the larger ruin, when, a few years ago, it occurred to the town council of Avignon that they might as well preserve so fine a monument of the Middle Ages.

Thus it happens that now the Sisters have it in their keeping, and what restoration was needed has been well done. They are proud of it, and show it with even more devotion than their pictures, declaring that it brings a blessing to their doors. The Sister who showed us over the place, was small and pathetic-looking, with a face white as her cap, and eyes that looked out from the long tunnel of starched white linen with an expression sweet and gentle.

Villeneuve we have said looks like a dead and melancholy city. There is no life or movement about its streets; everything seems at a standstill. It was called the ante-room of the popes: and an underground passage brought palace and fort into secret communication with each other.

The situation of the fort is bold and commanding, overlooking the waters of the Rhône and the Duranse; the vast plains stretching to the Mediterranean. Nothing could approach

unobserved: and if an enemy arrived, their reception was ready for them.

The climb up the rock was steep and toilsome, but the reward was great. The fort is of vast extent; a whole town of streets and fortifications. Within its walls was the Abbey of the Benedictines of St. André. The gateway, with its massive castellated drum-towers, looks as though it might outlive the ages. Once within, you are transported to feudal times, and look upon another world.

Suddenly, amidst the deathlike silence that reigned, there appeared the black dress and figure of a nun, and we discovered that a convent still exists here. She had come to do the honours of the place; took us to the small Romanesque Chapel which goes back to the twelfth century; opened doors and conveyed us through immense and wonderful rooms.

Most interesting of all was a small remote doorway, and the nun looked wonderfully picturesque as she bent down and applied the key to the lock, her black graceful dress standing out in strange contrast with the ancient and splendid masonry. Then she threw open the door and we entered a dark circular chamber that was half cell. In tones that thrilled her hearers and echoed in the roof, she said:

"This is the room in which the Man with the Iron Mask was confined, before he was taken to another and more open part of the Fort."

So here had languished for a time in captivity, that mysterious being, very nearly the most interesting figure in the pages of history. We almost felt on sacred ground.

H. C. struck a match, and by its light we saw that we were in a small vaulted chamber. Its walls were probably twenty feet thick. No ray of light penetrated this gloomiest of dungeons. We gazed around, hoping for some revelation of the secret that will never be known. Nothing but blank walls met us; he had not left even a signature behind him. Then the match died out, and plunged us in darkness deeper than before.

We left the cell, and the nun locked the door. Our visit, as far as she was concerned, was over. The room that had held the Man with the Iron Mask was her *pièce de résistance*, and she

had wisely kept it to the last. We thought of the anecdote recorded of him : the plate he is said to have thrown out of the window, on which he had written his name and history : and we felt that to recover that plate and learn the mystery would be worth a life's devotion.

Our guide departed, leaving us in possession of the ruins ; looking very graceful as she glided lightly down the narrow thoroughfares, almost as a ghost out of the dead past. But her face was very human, full of expression, full of life in a quiet way. Here she lived out of the world, but had by no means lost her interest in all that went on around her.

"I need not tell you that I am not cloistered," she said, when asked whether she ever crossed the river and went into Avignon. "I am a lay sister, and shall never be cloistered. Whenever I have a holiday I go off to my friends and spend some happy days with them. My father and mother, who are getting old now, live just behind the palace of the popes. I have brothers and sisters all living at home. They do not like my being here, and are always asking me to return : but though I love to be amongst them, I am always glad to come back to the repose of the convent and the gentle care of the nuns. Some day I may change my mind and go back to the noisy streets and the friends, but I don't much think so. Here is a settled, quiet home for life, with no uncertainty about it. In the world one never knows what is going to turn up next."

She was still quite young, this Sister ; not more than twenty-five ; and there was a good deal of youthful grace about her. Her face was almost beautiful ; the features well carved, the chin firm and pronounced, the brown eyes large and full of expression. There must be some reason for her present retirement. Had she been crossed in love ? Had some one proved faithless ? Or had she set up an idol of gold in her heart to find it only clay ?

We felt that something of this sort had happened. In time the sting would wear away, the wound heal ; she would go back to the world ; and wiser, and with romantic ideas toned down to human level, would give her heart and hand into better if more prosy keeping. The idylls of the heart, with few exceptions, exist only in dreams. "*Il y a toujours un qui*

aime, et un qui se laisse aimer." This world was not meant to be a paradise.

For a time we wandered about this dead world, which took us so far back in the ages that we seemed to return to the days when the popes held sway here, influencing the course of empires. Woe to those who ignored or opposed them. No nation bold enough to do so had yet arisen. King Harry of England was still in the far future. Mary Tudor, who for England happily made a return to Romanism impossible for all time (in spite of Cardinal Perraud and his prophecies), had not played her short but momentous tragedy; the Reformation was still undreamed of. A good deal of two centuries had yet to roll away before the great Emancipation was to fall upon our island.

When the popes ruled in Avignon they were kings: temporal as well as spiritual: with an enormous amount of wealth for carrying out their most extravagant wishes and despotic plans. From the top of the drum-tower, we looked out upon the vast area over which they ruled by right of possession.

The broad Rhône flowed deep and far, full of power and repose. Once more in imagination we saw all the gorgeous pageantry passing upwards. Fair Joan of Naples arriving to plead her cause, and to triumph; reserved for a later and more cruel fate. The cardinals with their red robes, meeting her beneath the flashing daïs. The oft-recurring fêtes, when the river was crowded with galères and small boats, and at night lights and torches gleamed to and fro upon its bosom; and sounds of revelry rose upon the air; and laughter and dancing and a merry crowd held the famous bridge in possession, and the bones of St. Bénézet turned in their coffin at the dissipation which never ceased, and the pampered luxury which knew no bounds and observed no laws.

Before us, rising above the river, stood the great walls of the town, throwing out their mediæval influence upon the nineteenth century atmosphere—an age of horrors, destructive to all that is beautiful, sacred and historical. Above the walls rose the outlines of that marvellous palace, vast as the ambitions of its sovereigns, firm and strong as their power, impregnable as their will. The outlines came out in strong relief against



PALACE OF THE POPES BY MOONLIGHT.



the blue sky shining above them, serene and calm in its majesty.

Later we stood on the bridge, near the chapel where once the bones of St. Bénézet had turned in their coffin.

It was the hour of repose. The garish daylight had departed; in the west a glow still lingered; the moon was rising behind the palace, throwing the walls into half-obscurity: a scene full of romance and charm. Full of quiet splendour were the outlines of palace and towers and cathedral against that silvery moonshine.

Inconceivably beautiful was the evening light upon the river; the jewelled pathway thrown by the moon. It was full to overflowing; almost ripe for the inundations that in a few days overtook it, consternation following in the path of the waters. On they rushed beneath the arches of St. Bénézet, loud with a sound of warning; yet a sound of power and energy and life, that, as Henri Roger had said, invigorated the spirit and braced up one's strength and resolution. The silvery flashes danced and sparkled, and the rushing water seemed to hurry them away towards the far-off sea, where they decked the hair of the sirens, and lighted up their halls. And all the while the moon rose higher; a dead world, calm, cold, unsympathetic, yet full of a magic that will never die.

A perfect night, a matchless scene; one of the most beautiful scenes on earth; steeped in romance: the everliving influence shed abroad by nature in her earthly paradises; the undying romance of the Middle Ages; of great deeds and achievements; passages in history that revolutionised the world, and will live as long as time rolls on; of which, time only deepens and widens the interest, surrounding all with that weird mystery which belongs to the days of the past; shadows, in a sense, of another world.

When we went back to the hotel, the square was silent and deserted. The picturesque courtyard, sleeping in the moonlight, was beautiful with outlines of vines and creepers traced upon the pale pavement. A warmer light shone through the windows. Madame Ville was keeping vigil at her desk; perhaps balancing her ledger; perhaps deep in the pages of a last new novel.

"Ah, monsieur," she said, "I can tell that you have been enjoying the moonlight—it is reflected upon your face. I do not wonder. If you stand at the further end of the long bridge, and look upon the rushing waters of the Rhône, the outlines of walls and palace, all bathed in that wonderful light, I always say there is no scene like it on earth. Certainly I have not seen your Alhambras, your Bays of Naples, your Venetian gondolas gliding up and down the moonlit canals; these may be all very well; but for me, give me, beyond anything I ever did see, the Rhône and Avignon on such a night as this."

How different from Arles, our present quarters! The more we saw of Madame Ville and the Hôtel d'Europe, the more they won our heart. Had it been possible we would have remained here for weeks, exploring the matchless neighbourhood, always returning to the most home-like of inns, most hospitable and reasonable of hostesses.

To-night, late though it was, old Pierre, our inimitable attendant, was in readiness to light us to our rooms; arranging everything for our comfort with the silence and ease of a perfect valet; and always retiring with the same words: "À votre service, monsieur." But now he added, with quite a fatherly intonation, an air of appropriation, not only excused but appreciated: "Bon soir, monsieur; dormez bien."

A wish fulfilled. All night we dreamed of moonlit rivers flowing to the sea; of sunlit streams, and gorgeous pageants; of fair Joannas making royal progresses and flashing love-lit glances; of vast palaces and imperious popes; and of blue serene skies that shed down their peace and repose upon a sleeping world.

## CHAPTER XII.

Remnants of the Middle Ages—Gabled house—Market day—Lively scene—H. C. tempted—Wonderful old house—A mediæval reception—In the palace of the popes—Cathedral—Notre Dame des Doms—Tomb of John XXII.—John of Battle—The Rocher des Doms—One of earth's fairest views—College of St. Joseph—Petrarch and Laura—Different accounts—Petrarch's life—Vaucluse—Where Petrarch fell in love—Platonic affection—Unkind to Laura—Petrarch ambassador—Laura dies—Petrarch retires to Vaucluse—Madame Ville enthusiastic—Laura said to appear—Madame's belief in ghosts—Vaucluse—The fountain—A charming spot—Petrarch's haunts—His house—Old centenarian—Pressing the grapes—Remembering Napoleon and Waterloo—Petrarch's ghost—"I have seen him with my own eyes"—Elixir Vitæ—Secret of long life—A ghoul—At the station—Plains of Vaucluse—Back in Avignon—Place Crillon—Where Marshal Brune lost his life—Madame Ville at her post—Her excellent Châteanneuf—Romance and magic.

To visit Avignon is to fall in love with it. Certain people may like certain places, but everyone must love this City of the Popes.

The place itself, taken as a whole, is not specially attractive. It resembles many another fairly thriving town in its narrow streets and modern houses. Here and there you come upon an ancient building; an old palace of the cardinals that has escaped destruction, standing out as a splendid monument of the days gone by; and for one such record, you are willing to put up with a whole street of modern outlines: nineteenth century barbarities.

But some of the ancient buildings were not palaces. Processions, gorgeous in scarlet, had never passed through their doors. No triple-crowned pope had pronounced a blessing upon the inmates on crossing the threshold, for triple crown never had crossed it. They were more humble records of the Middle

Ages, given up to commerce. The voice of the merchant, self-asserting, self-interested, was heard within the panelled rooms, not so keen and rasping then as now, because competition was less great, wealth less considered; men were larger and broader-minded—and had things more their own way.

Wonderfully picturesque are these isolated remains, with their gables and latticed panes, and dormer windows; with slanting red-tiled roofs distinguished by that exquisite tone that marks the remnants of the Middle Ages.

These rare examples of the past make one's walks in Avignon very pleasant. There is the element of uncertainty running through all. You never know at what moment you may chance upon a new discovery: a thirteenth or fourteenth century gem—until you have become thoroughly acquainted with the city. Then you make straight for certain points, and feast your eyes upon outlines that ever charm. Why have we fallen into opposite extremes in these days—towns hideous as wildest nightmare ever imagined?

One such gabled house in Avignon was especially striking, and standing near the market-place, was the centre of life and sound and movement.

It happened to be market day, and a lively scene was going on. Under the covered area, it is true, there were no signs or tokens of the Middle Ages. Those interesting men and women with their costumes and curious language had long slept with their fathers. Very little of the picturesque remained.

Yet what remained had its charm. The stalls with their fruits and vegetables were artistic and tempting; comely women, under their umbrellas were bright and animated; some of them speaking a patois not more intelligible than the tongue of the Middle Ages. There was great bargaining going on; a Babel of sound; buyers and sellers storming at each other as though they had been deadliest of foes and were about to draw knives or pistols: but ending up with a laugh and a handshake (the only market-place in which we ever saw any hand-shaking): and a cry of "*A la prochaine fois*" on the part of the seller, and an answering "*Si vous êtes raisonnable*" from the buyer.

Of course we came in for any amount of shrieking from

enterprising dames and damsels; and if H. C. had had his own way, it would have been a second edition of the affair outside the church walls of St. Rémy. But here we saw no artistic pottery; perhaps because we did not light upon the exact spot. The only artistic thing we did discover was the gabled house, before which we stood entranced.

One part of the straggling building had been turned into an inn. Leaded panes looked out upon a great courtyard, half filled to-day with market carts, picturesque with their quaint shafts and sides and circular hoods. The rooms within were dark with panelled oak, beams black and heavy stretched across the low ceilings. Massive staircases led upwards to other panelled rooms, with more low ceilings and cross beams, and wonderful latticed windows.

The note of discord in this perfect remnant was the modern furniture, out of place as a duck's egg in a hen's nest. But only a well-preserved palace or museum would have kept intact the movable decorations of four or five centuries ago.

One longed for ancient tapestry, old armour, signs and tokens of a past age of chivalry and romance. Had the power been ours, we would have peopled the rooms with visible ghosts. Joanna of Naples arm in arm with Clement VI., wearing his triple crown, his Holiness fascinated by her feminine charms; the eight scarlet cardinals who received her following close upon their heels. Under the gorgeous daïs flashing with gems, surrounded by the cardinals, queen and pope should have held a reception of the great people of the time. Louis of Hungary kneeling at the feet of Joan praying her pardon for his seditious rising. (Here swayed more by beauty than justice: Louis doubtless was right in wishing to avenge the murder of his brother.) Petrarch and Rienzi arm in arm, the one crowned with laurel, the other with his self-destroying pride. Whilst Rienzi delivered an eloquent speech pleading for the Restoration of Rome, Petrarch, mesmerised by the beauty of Joan's flashing eyes, in soft voice thrilling with love-tones, should have murmured one of his Sonnets to Laura—appreciated and approved by Joanna. Charles IV. of Austria and Jean le Bon of France, brother monarchs, hand in hand: the weak face of the Austrian, the amiable yet more determined expression of

Jean contrasting with each other. The courtyard we would have filled with soldiery and ecclesiastics; cloak and cowl side by side with sword and helmet; every order having its representative—and we have seen that the orders were legion.

But however good the will, the power to conjure the ghosts was wanting. We had to content ourselves with the architectural outlines of those past ages which had outlived the picturesque and stirring times of the popes.

And making a short circuit, and a steep climb upwards, we presently found ourselves in front of the vast palace in which the popes had lived and moved and had their sumptuous being.

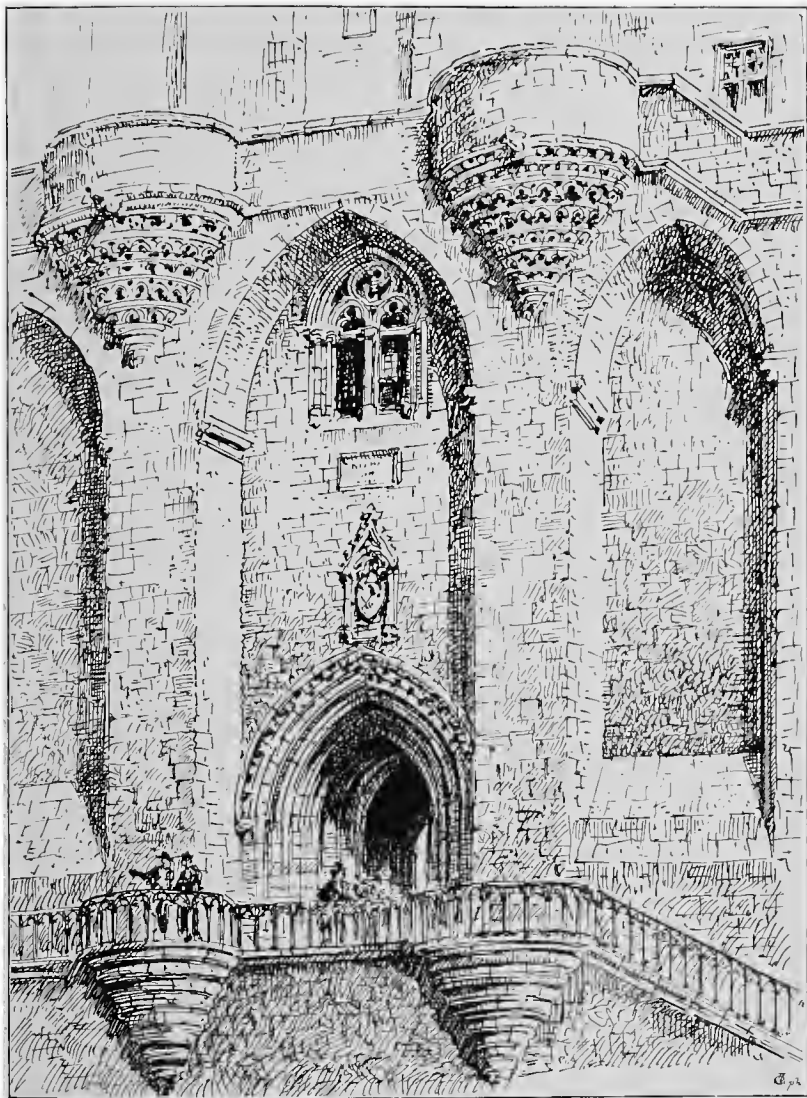
As we have said, its glory has departed, but its extent may still be measured. The lofty yellow walls stood before us, sad and melancholy, for it was impossible to avoid contrasting the present with the past.

Here the seven popes of Avignon held sway for the best part of a century: for more than a century, if we include the three anti-popes, who prolonged the papal rule another forty years. Here scenes of gorgeous pageantry took place; of revelry and dissipation that have become historical. Here the popes ruled the world, and exercised their will, and woe to those who defied them. Imprisonment, a dismal dungeon, the oubliette, a life secretly ended, these were some of the terrors that awaited any who dared oppose the papal pleasure.

Here indeed it was not difficult to conjure up any amount of ghostly ceremonial. It needed no vivid imagination to fill the great courtyard—the *Cour d'honneur*—with a gorgeous assemblage: enormous dimensions rendering the possibilities for display almost unlimited.

The whole place has now been turned into barracks; halls have been divided and subdivided; all the splendours of decoration, most of the frescoes, have disappeared. One may well say that the place is desecrated; though military discipline has taken the place of pomp and revelry.

It was in the early barrack days of 1815 that so much damage was done. At that time the soldiers were more undisciplined, had it more their own way, could do and dare acts



CHIEF ENTRANCE, PALACE OF THE POPES.



that would to-day bring their fortunes to a summary ending. They were the days when "le petit caporal" had swept his sword through Europe, not caring what traces his men left behind them, so they won his battles; days when a stroke of his pen created monarchs or brought them to the ground.

We passed through hall after hall, and thought we should never come to an end. In days gone by they must have been magnificent indeed. Though subdivided, many were still enormous. Most of them were given up to the soldiers. One was fitted up as a perfect armoury. A splendid staircase of stone led up to the great hall, the *Salle du Consistoire*. Here popes and cardinals had assembled in solemn conclave to settle the affairs of church and state and launch forth edicts. Its magnificent vaulted roof was painted in fresco by Martini in 1339, when Benedict XXII. was pope. One can still faintly trace some of the outlines: figures of the Old Testament prophets with fluttering garments and long waving hair and grand heads, and sibyls on a blue ground.

Next to this came the enormous *Salle de Conseil*, so large that it has been divided into various rooms and two floors.

Throughout, the palace walls are said to be seventeen or eighteen feet deep. The entrance was defended by drawbridges, a portcullis and iron gates; and above this well-guarded entrance was the balcony from which the pope blessed the people on great occasions. At such times the great square must have been almost as imposing a spectacle as St. Peter's at Rome.

We ascended the Tower of St. John, with its two chapels: the pope's chapel on the ground floor, the vaulted chapel of the Inquisition above it: forming perhaps the most interesting part of the palace as it now exists. The frescoes are better preserved than those in the large halls. In the chapel of the pope one traced the life of John the Baptist: in that of the Inquisition, scenes from Martial, Stephen, Peter and Valerian, painted by Martini and his pupils.

We went on to the Chamber of Torture: the *Salle de la Question*, as it was called, where the weak confessed, and the strong died. A curious room, with funnel-shaped walls, and nothing terrible about it but the recollection of past horrors.

From this a flight of steps led down to a dungeon in which Rienzi was for a short time imprisoned ; and still beneath this was an oubliette, sunk far below the foundations of the palace, shrouded in impenetrable darkness.

Close to the Tower of the Inquisition was the *Tour de la Glacière*, into whose depths, in 1791, sixty innocent victims, men and women, were thrown by a band of democrats. As the prisoners were dragged from the cells, a dagger was plunged into them, and where life was not extinct they were hurled from above. In that latter part of the last century demons were let loose upon the earth.

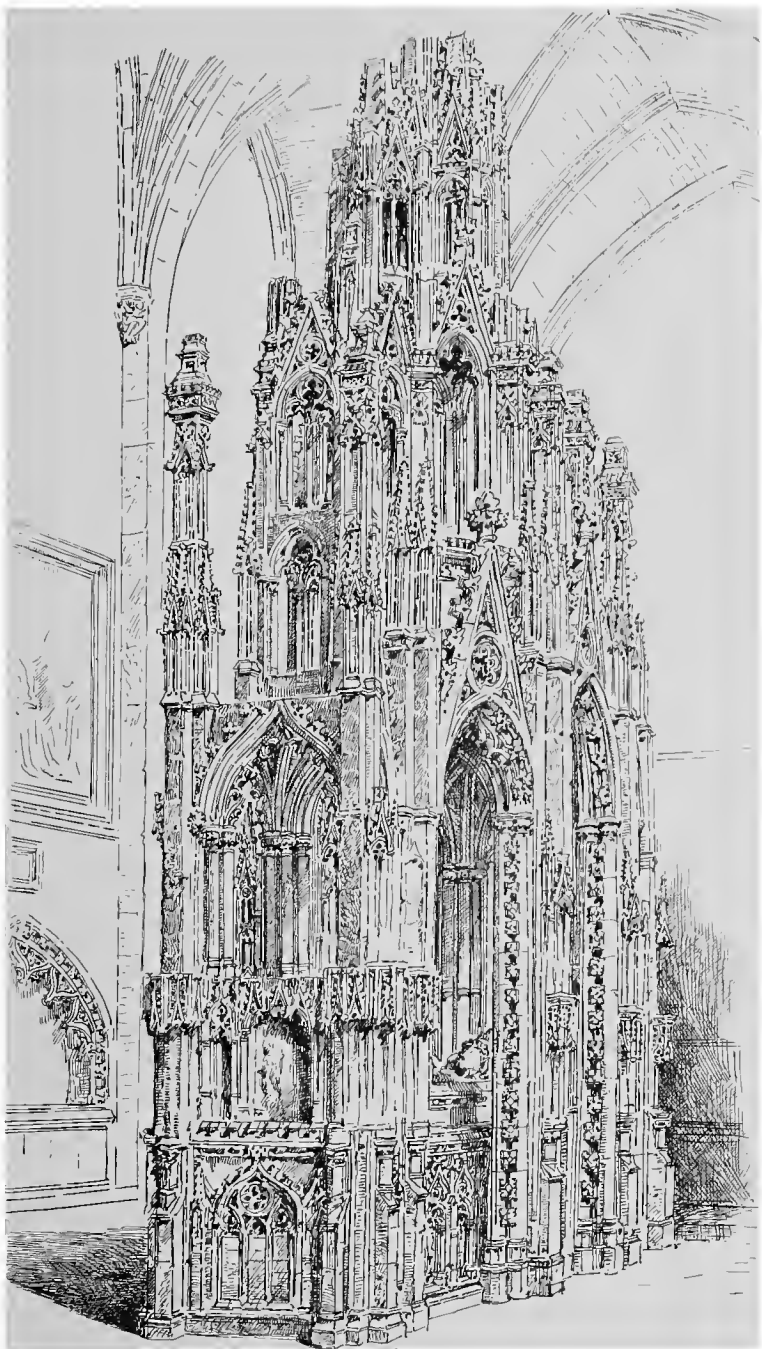
One of our last visits was to the Tour de Trouillas, where Rienzi lived his five years in chains. Here Petrarch visited him, obtained him many small favours, and finally succeeded in getting him restored to liberty.

This is one of the six remaining towers of the palace. Originally there were seven : and an old saying ran that, so many towers, so many popes.

The only atmosphere now ruling the palace is military. There are soldiers at every turn, bugles for ever sounding. Several guides take you in charge at different times ; there is a great ceremony of locking and unlocking doors ; you are as much looked after as though it were possible to carry off the remaining frescoes, or bring down the massive walls. Your last guide politely sees you off the premises with the intimation, "*Monsieur, la visite est faite ;*" and the *douceur* brings the usual imperial bow.

There is still a suspicion of greatness and grandeur about the palace. Its vast height and size must always be imposing. The great courtyards, enormous rooms, magnificent staircase down which popes and cardinals swept "in all the pomp and pleasure of pride," these cannot fail to recall those past times of regal splendour, when Avignon, in a sense, was almost mistress of the world, and the pageantries of Rome and the power of Rome had taken up their abode within her walls.

To pass out by the great entrance, once guarded by draw-bridges, portcullis and iron gates, was to leave a world still haunted by the shadows of royalty, for all the commonplace impressions of this nineteenth century.



TOMB OF JOHN XXII.



And yet, as long as you linger in the great square the impression can never be commonplace.

Just above the palace the Cathedral is reached by a long flight of steps; perched on the impregnable rock, overlooking the broad waters of the Rhône. Though Romanesque and dating back to the eleventh century, it is not very imposing, for it has been terribly restored and rebuilt. The façade is a projecting porch, with a circular arch supported by fluted Corinthian columns: a porch so Roman in character, that it is often mistakenly supposed to have once formed the porch of a Pagan temple. The massive west tower is spoilt by being made the support for an octagonal base, on which stands a hideous statue of the Virgin. Much of the interior has been ruined, but it is splendidly decorated, the galleries of the nave having rich Renaissance balustrades of marble.

None of the side-chapels date earlier than the fourteenth century; many are later. In the Chapel of St. Joseph was once a passage leading to the palace. The chapel now forms the ante-chamber to the sacristy, and contains the magnificent Gothic tomb of John XXII. Once it stood in the nave, where it must have been far more effective. Over it is a Gothic canopy, very English in character, which has been compared with the tomb of Edward II. in Gloucester Cathedral. It is of the same school as the "Eleanor Crosses." The chief architect for the latter was John of Battle: "*Johannes de Bello*," as he is called in the foundation roll. John of Barnack and William the Irishman ("*de Hibernia*") assisted him—the latter as sculptor. It becomes a great question whether any of these found their way to Avignon—so accounting for the English work of these splendid tombs. When we find Italians at work in Westminster Abbey some years before this date—and a little later on Flemish architects and workmen at Lancaster and Lavenham in Suffolk—the probability seems largely increased. In the Middle Ages architects and carvers wandered very much about the civilised world, in search of work and ideas. Many a genius carried his ideas with him, but found little in return.

This tomb of John XXII. has been much mutilated. The statues were taken out of their niches at the time of the Revolution, when the reclining effigy of the pope also suffered.

Nevertheless it remains a rich and beautiful monument of that age. The papal throne still stands in the choir, and is used by the archbishop. It is of white marble, decorated with the Winged Ox of St. Luke and the Lion of St. Mark. Near it we found the tomb of the "brave Crillon," so beloved by Henri IV.

Behind the Cathedral is the Promenade du Rocher des Doms. If Avignon had nothing else to offer in return for a visit, the world might well flock to it in pilgrimage. It is doubtful whether France possesses another view so lovely, and the world itself can have few fairer scenes.

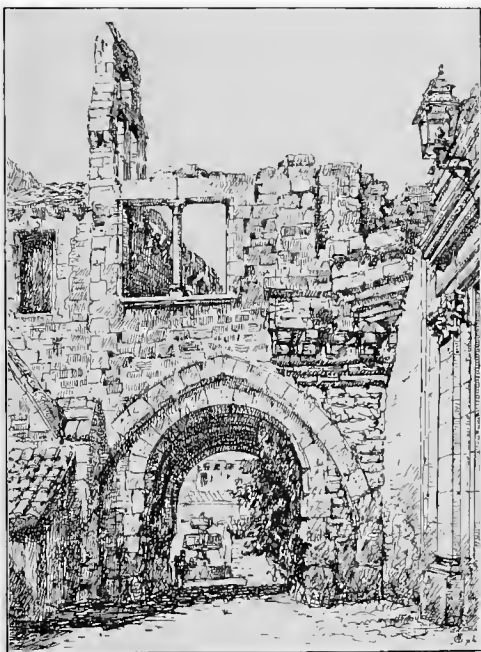
We stand on the edge of the perpendicular rock, 100 metres high. At our feet runs the broad and beautiful Rhône. The half-ruined Pont St. Bénézet, with its little chapel, stands out above the waters. Near the splendid Rhône flows the Duranse, with its troubled waters, and for very far we trace the winding rivers running like broad threads of silver through the land. Around us on all sides are the vast rich plains, here bounded by hills, there by the far-off Mediterranean.

In the distance we could almost see Arles, bringing back a flood of recollections. All its antiquities and Roman remains; our Barmecide banquets at the hotel; Madame's dignity making protestations impossible; her tact in warding off an unpleasant subject; her acuteness of hearing as a last resource in putting an end to a conference; our moonlight walk in the cloisters; Henri Roger, with his fire and enthusiasm, healthy dreams and ambitions—should we ever see it all again?

There, outside Arles, we just discerned the ruins of Mont Major and Les Baux: the latter too wonderful to be taken in at a single visit. The eagle-owl was still captive, the guide's appeal still rang in our ears: "*Prenez le, monsieur; acceptez le; il vous fera plaisir!*" Already we began to feel the appeal would not be in vain. Towards the north-west, losing themselves in the sky, rose the wild mountains of the Cévennes; "*le Désert*," as its people called it; the last stronghold, as we have seen, of persecuted Protestantism in France. To the east was Mont Ventoux, with the ancient town of Orange at its base: a conspicuous, isolated spur of the Alps, easily ascended,

and from which a splendid panorama is visible. The Alps rise beyond the Duranse, whose waters may be compared to a silver thread; those of the Rhône to a substantial cable.

We overlook the Palace of the Popes; the whole town of Avignon, enclosed in its massive walls. On the further bank of the river rises Villeneuve, picturesque, deserted; a dead town crowned by its magnificent citadel and ancient towers.



RUINS OF MONASTERY, VILLENEUVE.

We think of the picturesque nun; of the dungeon that contained the Man with the Iron Mask. And we wonder when the nun will come back to the world, and exchange her black veil for a bridal. She is far too pretty and graceful to waste her sweetness on the desert air of a convent.

On this rock we are surrounded by the attractions of Avignon; attractions that have given it world-wide fame and are not of a nature to pass away. The minor attractions are in the town itself; ancient houses that spring up here and there in

unexpected nooks and corners ; lesser churches, of which many still exist, though less than three hundred bells now clash out upon the air of this "ville sonnante;" the garden at the back of the Museum, containing a monument to the memory of Petrarch's Laura ; the church of the Cordeliers, which once held her tomb, destroyed with the church itself at the time of the Revolution. It is now the College of St. Joseph, and the youths clattering through the echoing corridor do not trouble themselves about the loves of Petrarch and Laura.

The day we visited it, men were digging in the quadrangle, on the very spot where Laura's tomb is said to have stood. It is a touching love record, yet curious.

Petrarch was born on the 20th July, 1304, at Arezzo, and in his youth studied at Pisa. Then his father migrated to Avignon, where the papal court was now placed. Here Petrarch met with his old professors, whom the civil wars of Italy had exiled. Later on he went to Bologna, where the most celebrated professors of that day were to be found. His studies ended, he visited all the chief towns in Italy, and on his return to Bologna received the news of his mother's death. Within a year his father died also, unable to survive the loss of his wife.

Petrarch and his brother, now left alone in the world, took up their abode in Avignon: the brother became a monk, Petrarch gave himself up to the study of poetry.

One record declares that he was twenty-two when he first met Laura ; another that he was thirty.

Of Laura also, there are two different accounts. According to one legend, he first beheld her at Avignon, in the church of the Nunnery of St. Claire. Laura was then seventeen. It is said that he never spoke to her ; she never knew his love ; he worshipped her in secret, pouring out his soul in song. This seems a very unsatisfactory way of treating poor Laura. Then she married Hugues de Sade, a commonplace man of commerce, instead of the refined and worshipping poet, had a large family of twelve children, and suffered much from domestic worries. Large families of twelve children were evidently difficult to manage in those days, though probably an easy matter compared with the large families of to-day.



ANCIENT TOWER, VILLENEUVE.



After some years Petrarch travelled through France, Germany and Italy, returning to Avignon with Rienzi. By this time the beauty of Laura was fading under her numerous domestic cares. Still he loved her, and still "he never told his love." Of course having delayed telling his love at the proper time, as an honourable man he could not do so now that she was an appropriated blessing and the mother of a large family. He continued to pour out his soul in song, and if Laura read the sonnets, no doubt she wondered who the other fortunate Laura could be. She probably never recognised herself. We never do recognise ourselves. Self-recognition is said to be the hardest of all lessons.

In 1348 Laura de Sade died, worn out with the burden of life. Petrarch still continued to love and worship her, and write sonnets to her memory.

Such is one unsatisfactory and highly improbable account. We prefer the other tradition, which declares that the Laura of Petrarch's devotion was born, lived and died in Vacluse. Here he is said to have first seen her, when he was thirty and she was eighteen. The internal evidence of many of Petrarch's sonnets certainly favours this view: and internal evidence is worth more than mere tradition.

Petrarch had withdrawn from the world to the solitude of Vacluse, attracted by its beauty and charm. He was walking one day in the woods bordering the river, when suddenly this angel in human form appeared before him, amazed his mind, dazzled his vision and captivated his heart for evermore.

According to this tradition Petrarch did tell his love, and won the love of his Laura in return. Yet on Petrarch's side it seems to have been too platonic. He never married her; it was simply a union of soul and intellect. He contented himself with pouring out all the richness of his emotions in poetry.

A lovely idyll, of course, but again one feels for poor Laura, who was not a poet, and had not that resource to fly to. She appears to have been lovely beyond words, pure, high-souled, ethereal. They wandered in dreams. The trees caught up and treasured the love whispers of the pair, as arm in arm,

or with arms gracefully intertwined, they stole through the deserted groves. The birds raved, telling them it was spring-time, and lovers should pair and build them a nest. Even the trees murmured reproachfully something of the same sort. All in vain. Their ears were closed to the grosser loves of earth. It was a celestial contract.

For some reason, Petrarch seems to have fought against this love. He wished to conquer it; made voyages in the hope of effacing Laura's image from his heart. After all, he must have been of a cold ascetic nature; it is even said that his affection for his father and mother was not very deep. Yet he remained faithful to his divinity to the end, and to the end of his life wrote love-sonnets about her.

Nor did his voyages have the effect desired; her image was never obliterated; absence only made the heart grow fonder. On the whole, Petrarch must have been a strange contradiction: and one can only forgive him for the sake of the pure and lovely idyll that has come down to posterity.

The end was to come all too soon.

Petrarch was ambassador in Italy when he heard the news of Laura's death. Unable to support the separation, at the age of thirty-two she died of love.

Then of course Petrarch was inconsolable. He left Rome, and returned to Vacluse, where he lived the life of a hermit, wandering about the woods and streams in search of her. Everywhere her image met him, and yet he found her not. The groves seemed full of the sound of her sweet voice, but when he called aloud upon her name, the silence of the grave answered him. He poured out his soul in poetical requiems. His pen and books were his only companions; to them he whispered his grief; no monk in remote monastic cell was more completely cut off from the world.

This went on for five years, when Petrarch left Vacluse for Italy, passing his time in poetry and abstruse studies. He did much to cause a revival of philosophy and letters in the fourteenth century.

In 1341 he had been crowned laureate in the Capitol, having received a similar invitation from Paris on the same day, and choosing the former. The University of Paris had just

been founded: the prestige of Rome was centuries old: and Petrarch was devoted to his country. He died near Padua in 1374, with the name of Laura on his lips, and the image of Laura in his heart. Nor can we doubt that she was permitted to meet him at the entrance to the dark valley, where, hand in hand, they passed into the light eternal.

This seems to us a more satisfactory and possible idyll—even though it leave something to be desired. Laura de Sade could not have wandered with him through the amaranthine groves of Elysium, since she belonged to another. And we repeat that the sonnets point far more to a Laura of Vaucluse, than the Laura de Sade. In fact they make the tradition of the latter impossible.

It was to this Vaucluse, haunted by such an atmosphere of poetry and romance, that we one day turned our steps, urged thereto by Madame Ville, our hostess of the Hôtel d'Europe.

“Ah, monsieur,” she said to us one morning, “you have not been to see our Fontaine de Vaucluse. Are you not going there?”

“Is it worth a visit?” we asked, just for the sake of seeing madame fall into rapture and remonstrance.

“Worth a visit, monsieur!” she echoed with tears in her voice, and as nearly indignant as her gentle nature permitted. “For me there is nothing like it. You may take your Mont Major and Les Baux, even your Roman antiquities, if you will give me Vaucluse. Then think of Laura and Petrarch: all that wonderful atmosphere of love and romance that has surrounded it for five hundred years and more.”

“But, madame, we think Petrarch behaved badly to his Laura. He ought to have married her, and made her an affectionate husband, and not left her to die of disappointed love. Laura died of love for Petrarch, madame. It was unnatural on his part.”

“Oh, monsieur, I cannot agree with you,” returned Madame Ville in fervent ecstasy. “Think how much grander and more beautiful it all is. Their love was fit for heaven, with nothing gross or earthly about it. It is a great poem; a charming idyll: and takes rank with Dante and Beatrice, and the few pure loves

of that description that have been handed down to us from the centuries."

"That is all very well, madame. The fact remains that Laura died of love for Petrarch, and he might have married her, and bade her live for him, and rendered her life a paradise on earth. Of what use all his raving and repentance after she had left him? We cannot forgive him; and if we go to Vaucluse, and come across his ghost, we shall reproach it."

"I never heard that he appears," smiled madame. "But it is said that on certain anniversaries Laura may be seen at the twilight hour; a tall, graceful woman robed in white, with hands outstretched as though seeking Petrarch, or greeting his approach. Her beautiful eyes shine like stars, and a sweet sad smile hovers about the mouth; and it is said she has been heard to whisper, 'Petrarch, my beloved!' in the most melodious of tones. I don't know how that may be. For my own part I doubt if ghosts ever talk. I never heard of their doing so."

"Then you believe in ghosts, madame?"

"Oh, monsieur, as I believe in heaven! Why doubt what we know to exist in the other world? Is it so surprising they should sometimes appear in this? The whole weight of evidence is in their favour. To tell me that all we hear is the result of fancy, a diseased imagination; tales made up for the occasion—no, that is impossible."

"Have you ever seen a ghost, madame?"

"Ah, monsieur, I once had a strange, a marvellous experience. I would not tell it to every one, for people would never believe me; and to me the subject is sacred. When I have a spare half-hour, if you like I will tell it you. Whether you accept it or not, you will, I know, receive it *en bonne foi*. But now let me entreat you to visit Vaucluse. Over and above the romance of Petrarch and Laura, the place is charming in itself. You will be delighted."

This advice, so corresponding with our own desires, we accepted without hesitation.

The very next morning after the above ghostly conversation, we started for Vaucluse by an early train. Rich plains surrounded us, watered by many small streams, tributaries of the



OLD HOUSES, VAUCLUSE.



Rhône and the Duranse : a flourishing district, rich in vineyards, which produce the famous wine of the country, so prized by Mademoiselle Charlotte. Factories also abound, of silk and wool and paper, and the romantic waters of Vaucluse give them their motive power.

The train soon reached l'Isle sur Sorgues station for Vaucluse. Here an omnibus waited to take us to Petrarch's beloved haunts, and half an hour's pleasant drive brought us to the quaint village. The inn was severely primitive in everything excepting prices. We ordered a modest luncheon to be ready for us later on, and for some trout they charged by weight—its weight in gold. But we saw at once that Vaucluse was very picturesque. Madame had not exaggerated its merits.

The word Vaucluse comes from *Vallis Clausa*—*Vallée Close*—corrupted to Vaucluse. The village possesses wonderful old nooks and corners ; houses centuries old, singularly picturesque, and it must be added, shudderingly dirty. The valley is a cul-de-sac, excavated in the side of the mountain. Perpendicular walls rise on either side ; yellow walls, broken and rugged and bare of verdure, 650 feet high, and strangely honey-combed, as though giants had once bombarded them with gigantic shells.

The walk from the village to the "fountain" takes about a quarter of an hour, a walk of surpassing interest and charm. You are shut in by these yellow walls. The Sorgues rushes over its torrent bed, filled with great boulders of fallen rock, its waters a clear emerald.

The day we visited Vaucluse they were more rapid and abundant than usual. The scene was wild in the extreme ; the whole place haunted by the influence of Petrarch and Laura. We could not get away from the impression. High up on the mountain were the ruins of an old castle that belonged to the Bishops of Cavaillon, and here lived Cardinal de Cabassoli, Petrarch's great friend. In imagination we saw him toiling up the steep sides, to confide to the Cardinal his love for Laura, and to read him his last sonnet.

It is a very different scene now from the Vaucluse of Petrarch's day. His beloved woods and groves where he was wont to linger with Laura, have disappeared. Factories and

ironworks have established themselves on the banks of the river, but they have not been able to spoil its beauty. The cliffs are said to hold rich prizes for the botanist.

The course of the Sorgues is picturesque and romantic as it froths over its rocky winding bed, the stones covered with bright green moss, the banks lined with brushwood and tangle. Towards the end of the valley, the water widens; trees overhang the surface; there are boats to take you to the mouth of the mysterious cavern, where the river has its rise. No one has ever sounded the depths within the cavern; none know whence spring the inexhaustible supplies. At times the volume of water is enormous.

The day of our visit it had risen to a great height, and the mouth was entirely covered. Before us rose the end of the cul-de-sac, a yellow perpendicular rock running round in a semicircle, 600 feet high.

We had the place to ourselves, and nothing disturbed the solitude of the lovely scene. Everything seemed to suggest Petrarch and Laura. These were his beloved haunts. Here for twenty years he retired from the great world, writing his poems and sonnets, enjoying day after day and year after year freedom and leisure; living, apparently, only to sing the praises of Laura, and feast his platonic gaze upon her matchless beauty.

Returning to the town, and crossing the bridge, we passed under some wonderful old houses perched on the hill-side, on the opposite bank of the torrent. Soon we came to a small house, where Petrarch is said to have lived. Perhaps he never did live there; possibly it only came into existence long after he had rejoined his Laura in the eternal amaranthine groves; but we accepted the statement in good faith.

It was a small, square cottage lying under the shadow of the great rock, overhanging the torrent, whose waters dashed their spray against its walls. There was not a trace of fourteenth-century architecture about the little house, and yet it looked old enough to have seen twice six hundred years. But Petrarch was a great botanist, a passionate lover of flowers, and here he may have cultivated his gardens. Trees and creepers overhung the broken walls; trellis-work ran the whole length



VAUCLUSE.



of the house covered with abundant vines; in the open space in front, men were pressing the grapes: altogether a very picturesque scene.

Out came a wonderful old woman and stood in the porch. She looked as old as the house, and was grandmother and great-grandmother to the three grape-pressers. Intensely interested in the photographs we took, she posed herself and her men-kind in what she considered becoming attitudes; and, in return, volunteered to show us the house.

The rooms were small, dark and gloomy; a scent of grape-juice, musty, acrid, seemed everywhere; it was difficult to imagine Petrarch ever putting up with such lodgment; his visit to the castle on the height would have suggested too strong a contrast. The small staircase leading to the upper rooms was old and rickety—it was hard to see what kept the house together.

"We don't know ourselves," said the old woman, in a thin, high-pitched voice. "Every now and then we hear a crack and a rumbling, and I say there goes the old house at last, but it is always a false alarm. It will last my time, I think. I was born here, and here have lived my days, hardly ever sleeping a night away. If it fell to pieces, I should go with it."

"How old are you?" we ventured to ask in fear and trembling, since it is not the thing to ask a lady's age.

"Ah, monsieur, I go with the century. On the 1st of January, 1800, I first saw the light. I should like to see the century out, then may as well depart with it, for I'm not of much use in the world now."

"But you are still active," for she had skipped up the staircase as if she feared it would give way before reaching the end.

"Yes," she answered. "I still have the use of my legs and arms, and the memory is as good as ever. I remember all about the days of Napoleon, and the commotion of Waterloo. If MM. Erckmann-Chatrian had come to see me when they wrote their book, I could have told them many an anecdote they would not find in any record. I am the grandmother of Vaocluse: ten years older than any other woman in the place.

It follows that I must also be the wisest woman, since I have most experience of life."

We ventured to suggest the experience must have been limited, if she had scarcely ever slept away from her own roof. But she had her own opinion upon the matter.

"It's not travelling that enlarges the mind," she declared, "but thought and reading. I have done a good deal of both in my time, though you would not think so. Whenever the women of the village want advice—and the men, too, sometimes—they come to me and get it; and if they don't follow it they always repent."

"What about Petrarch?" we said, turning the subject lest we should disturb the old lady's good opinion of herself. "Is it possible that he ever lived here?"

"Possible, monsieur? It is certain. He haunts the rooms. I have seen him with my own eyes—in this very room that we are standing in. I have heard him give a long sigh; several times I am certain he has whispered the name of Laura."

"And has Laura ever appeared?"

"Never. I have often wished she would come, for I wanted to see how beautiful she was; but she never has come; not through all the sixty or seventy years that I have tried to bring her before me. She will never come now. Perhaps I shall go to her."

There was a small vat or tub of wine standing in the room preparatory to being bottled. In the largeness of her heart, the old woman offered us a red draught, "to drink to her one hundredth birthday;" but even that bribe was not sufficient; we felt it prudent to decline.

"Well, monsieur," she said, "if you will not drink to my health, I will drink to yours."

And she dipped a small tumbler into the red liquid, and drained it to the dregs. It might have been after a few such libations that Petrarch appeared to her, sighing and whispering the name of Laura.

"Excellent wine, monsieur," cried the old woman, with almost a sparkle in her sunken eye. "But for an occasional glass of it, I shouldn't be here now. I always throw into it a certain herb which prolongs life—see how it has prolonged



PRESSING THE GRAPE JUICE, PETRARCH'S HOUSE.



mine. It is a secret handed down to us from my great-grandmother, who lived to be ninety, and my grandmother and mother both lived to be ninety-one. Differently placed I might have made a fortune out of this elixir of life."

"What is the herb, madame? One would like to profit by your knowledge."

"Ah, monsieur, I cannot tell you. My mother always said, 'Communicate the secret, and the charm will go.' I have never told it to a soul all these years. And yet they say no woman can keep a secret."

"You have proved the contrary, madame, yet if you broke it now you might do some good."

"No, monsieur; the secret must descend in the female line. What the charm is, I know not. Now I have no daughter; not even a granddaughter; all sons and grandsons. So with me the secret must die."

In the little front courtyard the men were still pressing the grapes, filling the tubs with the rich red juice. Vines hung over the porch; creepers drooped from the broken walls; a long path overshadowed by trees led to the river, where the water rushed and foamed over its rocky bed. On the opposite side rose the honeycombed cliffs. Behind us, far up, was the ancient castle, where Petrarch was always sure of a welcome. It had gone to ruin now, nothing remaining but a few walls and fragments.

But what remained spoke eloquently of Petrarch and the past. Thus had crumbled and faded the hopes of Laura. Being human, and *not* a poet, she must inevitably have hoped for a closer sweet communion with him who professed such adoration for her pure and beautiful self. Platonic love is all very well, for paradise; for mere friendship, whether between the same or the opposite sexes: but Laura died of her love for Petrarch.

Oh, Petrarch, cold and cruel, you were unworthy of your Laura. It was she who truly loved and worshipped; you merely pandered to your poetic vein and fancy. *Il y a toujours un qui aime, et un qui se laisse aimer.* It is too true.

The men were pressing the grapes, going everlastingly round and round, like a blind donkey at the well.

"Eh, bien, monsieur," said the grandson, as we appeared,

"has the old woman been telling you about Petrarch's ghost, and how he appears to her? I don't believe a word of it; never have believed it. Once she pointed him out to me. 'There he is,' she said, 'up in that corner with a laurel wreath round his head.' As far as I could see, there was absolutely nothing but blank wall. The old grandmother imagined it."

"Shame upon you!" cried the centenarian. "You know me better than that. As a punishment, I will haunt you when I die."

The grandson made a face of horror which the old woman could not see, but which was so comical that we could but laugh. Fortunately the wine tub overflowed at that moment, and everyone's attention was diverted; and when all was put right again, we had taken our leave and were on our way back to the inn and luncheon.

Anything more primitive could not be imagined. A deal table; no cloth; knives, forks and plates of the roughest description—prices that rivalled the *Café de la Paix*.

"The next time we visit *Vaucluse*," said H. C., "we will get *Madame Ville* to prepare us a small basket of refreshments. Just as the landlord did for us at *Tarragona* when we went for the day to the ruins of *Poblet*. We had quite a regal luncheon with our chicken and *foie gras* and our *Lafitte*. It was at least a *quid pro quo*. And how the boy enjoyed his *déjeuner*—do you remember? It was a pleasure to see him eat and drink. But here it is *Arles* and starvation over again. They give us nothing, served on bare boards; the wine is worse than vinegar; and as for the women who wait upon us, they are as ugly as sin—vinegar double distilled—just what *Lady Maria* would approve of. But really my aunt's ideas and mine don't always agree. You can't expect it, can you? She is parchment—we are flesh and blood."

We paid the extortionate bill, not without a protest that might as well have been addressed to the rushing torrent, or the ruined castle.

"Il faut payer pour ses plaisirs," said the impertinent woman, who was hideous as a ghoul.

H. C.'s eyes flashed. We trembled. He took up an empty wine-bottle, and we thought he was about to hurl it at the head

of the ghoul, whose moments would have been numbered ; but happily she thought so too, and disappeared through the door like a flash of lightning. We saw her no more, except in nightmare dreams.

Then we went for a last look round. Behind the inn stood the quaint and picturesque village church, dating back to the eleventh century. On these very walls Petrarch and Laura must have gazed many a time. Beside it ran the river ; near it was a mill, and the rushing torrent turned a very picturesque wheel. It was a very charming, old-world nook, and on the hill side just above us were some wonderful old-world houses, worthy of the old grandmother in Petrarch's house. The romance was all outward ; internally they must have been fever-dens ; plague-haunted spots.

We stood on the old bridge, looking upwards. The torrent frothed and foamed. Round the angle was Petrarch's house, where the old woman was patiently waiting the end of the century, and the men were pressing the grapes. Here Petrarch must have stood many a time, making his reflections.

"Here art surpasses nature," he wrote to a friend. "The Sorgues rolls over its emerald bed, transparent as crystal. By its bank I cultivate a little stony and sterile spot, which I have dedicated to the Muses."

Alas, he dedicated his life to those inanimate muses ; he grasped the shadow instead of the substance ; most divine muse of all, the fair Laura, he allowed to sink into the tomb for love of him.

"The jealous nymphs," he continues, "dispute the possession of it with me ; they destroy in the spring the labours of my summer. I had conquered from them a little meadow, and had not enjoyed it long, when upon my return from a journey into Italy, I found they had robbed me of all my possessions. But I was not to be discouraged. I collected the labourers, the fishermen, and the shepherds, and raised a rampart against the nymphs, and there we raised an altar to the muses ; but, alas, experience has proved that it is in vain to battle with the elements. I no longer dispute with the Sorgues a part of its bed ; the nymphs have gained the victory."

But a slight change has come over the scene since those

days. Factories have sprung up, the nymphs have had to yield. What the hand and skill of Petrarch failed to accomplish, science and machinery have done. The Sorgues still runs, but its waters have been made useful as well as ornamental. With the song of the nymphs mingles the clang and throb of the ironworks. It is more prosy than in his day, hardly less beautiful.

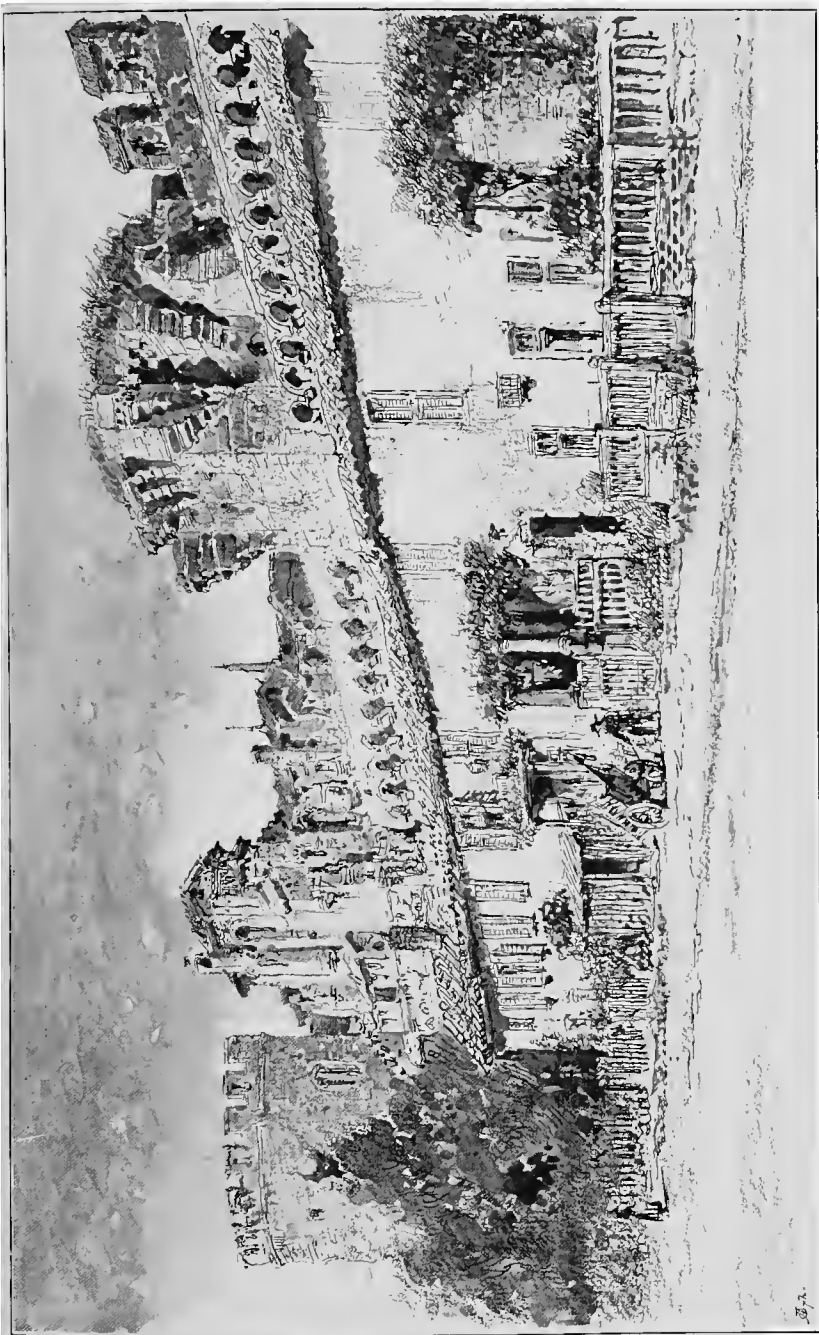
"Here I please myself with my little gardens and my narrow dwelling," he continues in his letter, which rather gives the key to his character. "I want nothing, and look for no favours from fortune. If you come to me you will see a solitary being, who wanders in the meadows, the fields, the forests, and the mountains, resting on the mossy grottoes or beneath the shady trees. He passes his days in the most profound calm, happy to have the Muses for his companions, and the song of the birds and the murmur of the stream for his serenade. I have few servants, but many books. Sometimes you will find me seated upon the bank of the river, sometimes stretched upon the yielding grass: and, enviable power, I have all my hours at my own disposal, for it is rarely that I see any one. Above all things, I delight to taste the sweets of leisure."

It was just this luxury of freedom, revelling in his own sweet way and fancies, that Petrarch could not give up, even for Laura. His greatest love of all must have been self. It is sad to think it, but if Laura of Vaucluse and not Laura de Sade was his goddess, it must have been so. Yet he could say after her death: "The world possessed her without knowing her and I, who knew her, remain here below to mourn her loss."

So we all say, when we lose for ever what we have not sufficiently appreciated.

So wept Petrarch perhaps; more faithful and human in his love in death than in life.

We might have lost ourselves in dreams of Petrarch and Laura and the dead centuries, on that bridge, if the omnibus had not come round with as much noise as a gun carriage, and wakened us to realities, the passing time, and the necessity for catching the train back to Avignon. There, most comfortable of inns, most hospitable of welcomes, and a well-appointed



COTTAGES ATTACHED TO THE OLD WALLS OF AVIGNON.



dinner-table awaited us. To pass the night in this wretched Vaucuse tenement, with its hideous declared ghoul and undiscovered vampires, would have been, as H. C. said, in mournful, melancholy tones, a sorrow's crown of sorrow: Arles out-Heroded. So we gave the scene a last long look, and turned away from it.

We were the only passengers, and travelled in all the state and majesty possible to a two-horse omnibus that tore along at the breathless rate of five miles an hour.

Nevertheless we had time to spare at the little station. They take life easily on the by-lines, far from the maddening crowd. For half an hour and more we patrolled the little station and wondered why tarried the train. It was simply that no other train depended upon its punctuality; and station-master and guards, porters and drivers had to exchange their little chronicles. But it puffed up at last, very quietly and leisurely. After waiting about ten minutes whilst the officials delivered their civilities to each other, we puffed off again.

The declining sun gilded the rich plains of Vaucuse. It is indeed a well-favoured department, from every point of view: rich in scenery, in the manifold fruits of the earth, in historical events, antiquities and remains; rich in a romantic atmosphere that has grown up and around it since the days of Petrarch and Laura, and in many a century that rolled away before they lived and loved and suffered. Above all, rich in that broad and noble river, which here goes rapidly but expiringly towards the sea; a river we would not exchange for the Rhine, and which is only equalled in interest and splendour by the Danube.

Through these plains, now mellow with autumn tints and bare from harvests gathered in, the train leisurely rolled on. We had time for noting every detail and admiring all the rich colouring of the changing foliage. Hills bounded the distance; there the Cévennes, yonder the Alpine range; Ventoux, Petrarch's favourite mountain, which he was wont to climb and where he wandered in poetic solitude, standing out majestically against the paling sky. In his day it was covered with forests of pines and birches, but not a tree remains. For ten months of the year it is snow-capped, and to-day as the sun declined it reflected a flush of delicate blue and rose

colour, which lighted up all its crevasses and rugged, wave-like surface.

Then came the welcome outlines of Avignon : the towering heights of the palace of the popes confronted by the equally formidable rock-fortress of St. André and the slopes of Villeneuve.

It was pleasant to get back to the familiar streets; the quaint and ancient Place Crillon, where stands the hospitable Hôtel d'Europe. Here again we are on classic and historical ground.

So recently as 1815—that disturbed and momentous period of the century—it was the scene of a terrible murder.

The Peninsular War was a thing of the past. Spain was settling down. St. Sebastian was slowly recovering from ruin and pillage. Fontarabia and Irun and Biarritz, the woods and hills and slopes of all the surrounding country had returned to their normal condition, save and except the ruined towns and houses that are not so quickly repaired as nature's ravages. The thousands of fallen soldiers of all nations had bleached unburied in the sun, had been devoured by wolves and vultures and other birds and beasts of prey. The sound of the cannonading was stilled, the smoke of the guns had vanished from those plains for ever. Wellington had passed to other conquests. Waterloo had just been fought. The whole of France was shaken, petrified with the news. Fortune had at length turned for "*le petit Caporal*," who had robbed France of the youth and flower of her population, yet who had been forgiven so long as his sword conquered. And now the tide had turned; the evil day had dawned; the youth and strength of the country had been sacrificed in vain; the old father would go down to the grave unsupported by the strong arm of the son; many a maiden must pass through life unwedded.

In Provence there were mobs of hot-blooded royalists, who turned with fury against the very name of Napoleon and went about committing every species of ravage.

Marshal Brune was passing through Avignon, armed with Lord Exmouth's passport. A passport from the pope himself would have been no safeguard against the fury of the mob.

His carriage had passed through the old gateway near the Hôtel d'Europe—even then a well-known and flourishing hostelry. He heard the roar of the mob in the square, and put out his head to see what it meant. They caught sight of him, stopped the carriage, and in a very few minutes the marshal had been barbarously put to death: his requiem the cry of these wild demons, who went on their way seeking further prey and plunder.

Very different was the quiet scene this evening. The square was deserted; calm and serene the blue sky overhead, flushed with tints of sunset; quiet and picturesque the vine-trellised courtyard of the hotel; gentle and amiable and earnest the face of Madame Ville looking through the window of her bureau. She wrapped her shawl closer round her as she came forward to greet us. To madame, however fine and warm the weather, it was the autumn of the year, and a shawl over the shoulders was as necessary as an October fire to an Englishman.

"Eh, bien, messieurs," she cried in her quiet tones that seldom rose much above a murmur: "I see you have been pleased with our Fontaine de Vaucluse. You have breathed the same air as Petrarch and Laura, gazed upon the same scenes; and no doubt the same thoughts have passed through your minds. I always think that Nature has a language of her own, interpreted in the same way by all who are in touch with her. As I cannot spare the time now for many excursions, I keep in tune with Nature by going to the bridge, and watching the flowing of the river, the wonderful effects of sunrise and sunset. Each time I go down the scene seems more fresh and beautiful and heavenly than before."

We were on madame's side in these matters, and in touching upon Vaucluse mentioned the singular old woman living in Petrarch's house.

"Poor Jeanne Bartellet," laughed Madame Ville. "A veritable curiosity, monsieur, but not a bad sort of woman. She is a little rough and rude, perhaps, but by no means ignorant. And she has led a very blameless life. A centenarian, and only a dried up mummy now, shrivelled and ugly—but what shall we be at her age? There is something glorious

in living one hundred years. Either they have led very good lives and heaven has kept them, or they have led very bad ones, and the devil has looked after them. One or the other. Jeanne has been a good woman. Her secret talisman?—the herb she throws into the wine? Monsieur, I have my doubts about it. Certainly she believes what she says; if she deceives she is deceived herself; but in my own opinion it is all fancy. She and her mother and her grandmother are a tough tribe; they would all have lived their age without the help of the talisman. It does not make centenarians of her neighbours, however much they may drink the charmed wine. Old age runs in families, like the gout; like goodness in some, no matter where they are, and badness in others, no matter what they do.”

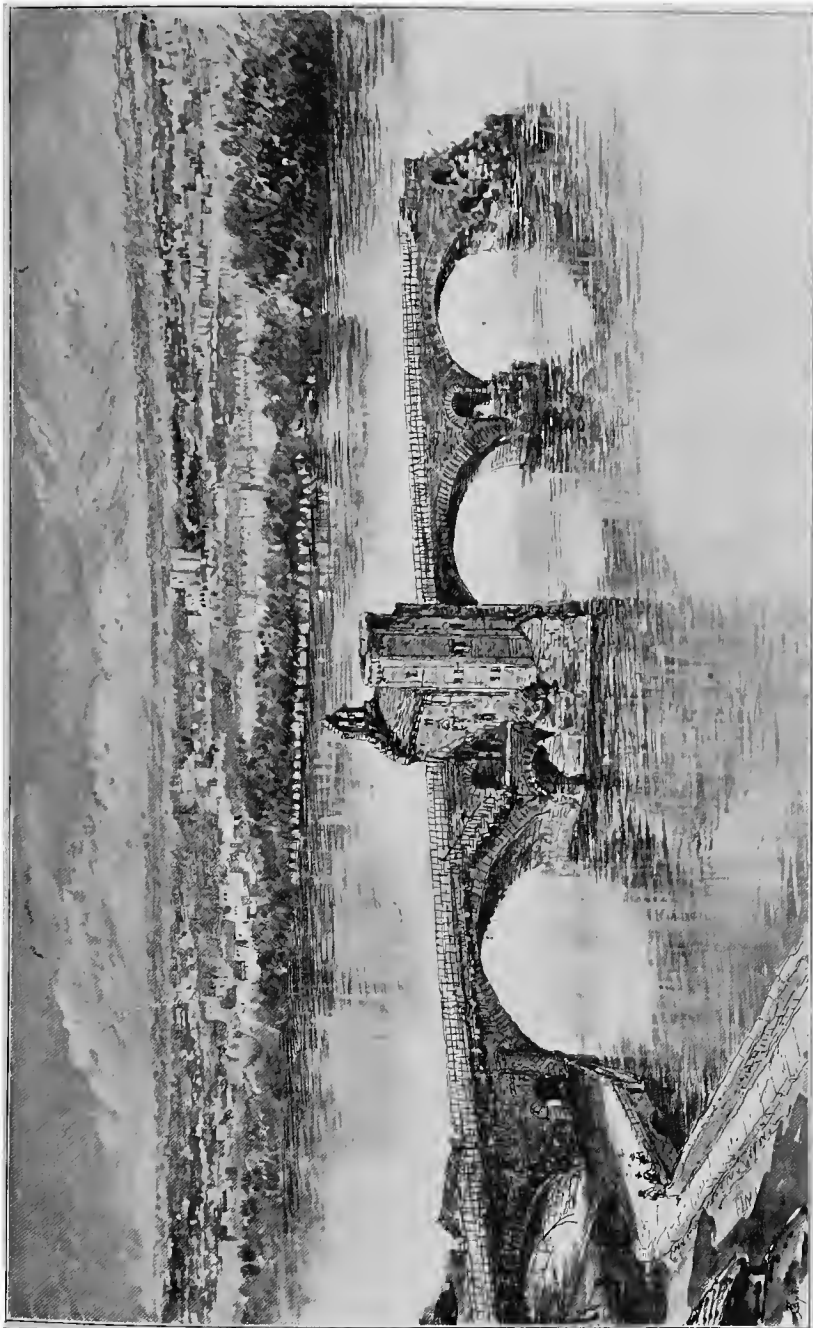
Dinner was presently announced, and it was a pleasure to enter the well-appointed *salle-à-manger*, with its numerous small tables and spotless linen, all well but softly lighted up. Nothing jarred or was aggressive over which Madame Ville had any control.

She had placed upon our table a bottle of her best Châteauneuf des Papes, excellent and reviving after our day's hard labours: a choice wine of the country. The village lies to the north of Avignon; the old château was a favourite resort of the popes, and before them of the Templars. St. Louis may have come here with his gorgeous train, himself most simple and most ascetic of all: and whilst his courtiers quaffed the Châteauneuf, Louis drank water and kept control over that calm reason and reflection, that close communion with the unseen, for which he was pre-eminent.

But all great things seem doomed, sooner or later. There came a wicked Baron des Adrets who set fire to the historic château from pure wanton love of wickedness and destruction, and nothing remains of it to crown the hill but one solitary, moss-grown tower.

Warmed and exhilarated by madame's generous Châteauneuf, by a dinner admirably dressed and served, we presently wandered out to our favourite spot, the bridge spanning the Rhône.

A clearer, more glorious night had never been. There was a crispness in the air unspeakably refreshing. The sun had set some time, but in the west, beyond Villeneuve and the Fort



BRIDGE OF ST. BÉNÉZET.



St. André, there lingered a faint and exquisite afterglow. The moon had risen behind the palace of the popes, which stood out in weird, wonderfully mysterious outlines, its battlemented towers and walls distinctly visible. Where the moon did not penetrate all was profound gloom and darkness, but only the more effective for that reason. Beneath us rolled the broad waters of this matchless river—we never tire of singing its praises ; of heaping up superlative adjectives ; of enforcing its charms upon the reader by reiteration amounting to importunity.

Never had we thought it more beautiful and impressive than to-night. Day by day the waters were increasing in volume and rapidity. To-night they flowed through the arches with a rushing, surging sound delightful to listen to.

Again the moon threw her jewelled pathway from bank to bank. The myriad jewels flashed and sparkled and danced, and the rushing waters swallowed them up and carried them away to the sirens in the deeper waters of the Mediterranean. Ville-neuve and St. André slept in the pale silvery moonlight. Our picturesque nun was probably sleeping the sleep of the just ; not dreaming of history and the Man with the Iron Mask, but of a day when she would go back to the world ; and of a lover who disappointed her not ; and of a ceremony where nothing black and sombre would be permitted.

It was altogether a magic scene, giving rise to a crowd of thoughts and incidents. The great days of the Popes of Avignon ; the beauty of Joanna before which all men bowed ; the gorgeous pageants of which this river had been the arena ; the rise of Avignon to splendour and its downfall to insignificance ; a name to conjure with, but no longer a power in the world.

We seemed steeped in romance and magic as we stood there whilst the hours chimed ; we gazed down upon the rushing waters ; and upwards at the illuminated outlines of fort and palace ; and yet higher at the dark sapphire sky where the moon rode in silent majesty and the stars followed in her train.

And we asked ourselves where else we could equal all the beauties, all the historical and antiquarian interests that abound in this matchless Valley of the Rhône.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Madame Ville's opinion—Avignon's historical past—From the Rocher des Doms—Ruins of bridge—What has become of the Sister?—Bric-à-brac—Unseen Oracle—Base conduct—Madame Ville to the rescue—Her extreme kindness—"Not worth the candle"—Madame triumphant—Floods dreaded—Good-bye to Avignon—Carpentras—Ventoux—Orange—Roman remains—Fine triumphal arch—Amphitheatre—Market day—Two worlds—Old doorkeeper—A misogynist—Wonderful parrot—"Je suis César!"—Doorkeeper's sanctum—César plays his part—Back in the world—More artistic pottery—House of Nassau—Old curiosity shop—Interesting couple—Washing a Sir Joshua—Old Roman glass—History of the couple—A lucky windfall—Mademoiselle Marthe—Madame Marie sees a ghost—The pearl of the necklace—A motor car—At the Hôtel de la Poste—"Few people come to Orange"—Bride and bridegroom—*Lune de miel*—E.'s letter—Nougat of Montélimar.

"I DECLARE that I do not exaggerate, monsieur. No town in the Lower Valley of the Rhône possesses a greater charm, more points of interest, than Avignon."

So spoke Madame Ville, as she put down her pen, closed her ledger, and drew her little shawl more closely round her shoulders.

And she declared nothing more than the truth.

Historically, as we have seen and know, Avignon has had a great past. Great was its rise and great its fall, amazing its vicissitudes. It has been the scene of some of the most gorgeous pageants of earth, and it has had to sit lowly, and clothe itself in sackcloth and ashes.

Every succeeding hour spent in the old town only served to increase one's affection for it; each passing day disclosed some fresh sign of the centuries gone by, reminding one time after time that this was the ancient city of the popes. As we stood upon the heights of the Rocher des Doms and gazed upon that

far-famed panorama, through which the great river takes its course, every foot of the vast stretch of country seemed historical and classical ground, as indeed it is.

The river rushed through the four remaining arches of the famous bridge of St. Bénézet with quite a mighty sound: arches that have withstood all the ravages of time and water, so well did the saint do his work. The whole nineteen arches would be still standing, if they had not been wantonly destroyed: time, the river and the air would have spared them: that climate which is described as "*Avenio ventosa, sine vento venenosa, cum vento fastidiosa.*" The chapel crowning the fourth arch long held the bones of St. Bénézet, somewhat in the unenviable position of Mahomet's coffin. For seven hundred years the river has risen and fallen beneath the bridge; now angry and furious, flooding the country and spreading desolation around; now falling into quiet ways as though meekest and mildest of rivers flowing to the sea.

Opposite rises the ancient fortress of Villeneuve, for ever associated with mystery and romance as well as with the fortunes of war; for here was confined the Man with the Iron Mask, than whom no character in history is more shrouded in uncertainty, more surrounded by mystery and romance. We may guess and wonder, but who he was can never be known. Secrets do not come back from the dead.

How interesting and picturesque was the Sister who conducted us about the ruins, moving silently in her nun's dress, and speaking in a low subdued voice. How pathetic her eyes, how charming her tones, when she spoke of her past and the world she had for a time forsaken. Three years have rolled by since that day when she suddenly plunged us from the glamour of broad sunshine and blue skies into the profound obscurity of the dungeon in which the Man with the Iron Mask passed some of the hours of his life-long captivity. Three years: what has she done with them? Has she relented, and gone back to the world, and become a happy wife, making the paradise of some fortunate man? If it is not so, it will be so when the day comes and the hour strikes, for it was writ in the stars that she should not die unwedded. There are some faces with their fate for good or ill so plainly marked that they who possess the

gift of the seer in the least degree can foretell the future. Not every face carries this index; happily they are comparatively rare; but when seen are unmistakable.

A hundred cords seemed to bind us to Avignon, not least of all the admirable Hôtel d'Europe, and the extremely amiable and attentive Madame Ville; who has since proved her fidelity to her guests in the following manner.

One day, wandering with H. C. into a bric-à-brac shop, of which there are not a few in this ancient City of the Popes, we lighted upon a prize: two prizes. One, an engraving of Philip V. of Spain, of which we happened to possess the original picture. Next some old blue jars, which, if not exactly prizes, were too good to be rejected. Lastly, greatest prize of all, a large carved old panel, dating not exactly from the days of the popes of Avignon, yet owning some centuries of existence: one of the loveliest panels, some of the very finest carving we had ever seen. We secured it, paid for it, and the whole was immediately to be forwarded to England.

Before leaving this Temple of Antiquities, the presiding goddess—a shrivelled old woman of seventy—brought forth a pair of silver pistols with gold and silver trappings, and used all her powers of persuasion in trying to effect a bargain. To this persuasion was added that of her son. Nothing would induce him to come out of his distant shell, but the unseen Oracle made himself heard.

The pistols had belonged to a prince of a French Royal house, which, the old woman considered, added infinitely to their value. If we did not share her opinion, we kept it to ourselves. The pistols, she declared, were worth their weight in gold. "With a few diamonds thrown in," came from the unseen Oracle. But she would only charge us their weight in silver, she protested. "At which they are given away," chimed the Oracle.

From the price asked we thought they must be enormously heavy. Moreover, we had no weakness or hobby for silver pistols, or anything else of the rococo school, and we resisted the old woman's persuasions even when backed by the Oracle.

Time passed on. The case duly arrived in England, minus the panel, plus the pistols! A note was enclosed. The old woman and the Oracle deplored that by accident they had sold the panel, but hoped the substitution of the magnificent pistols would atone for the oversight.

An eruption of Mount Vesuvius was nothing to our wrath. To substitute a pair of wretched pistols for a panel that had not its equal in the South Kensington Museum deserved only one return: to hasten back to Avignon, despatch the wicked old woman with one firearm, the perfidious Oracle with the other. This would send both to their proper regions, where they might bear each other company. A night's rest moderated our wrath, and we decided on less severe measures. We returned the pistols to Madame Ville; placed the matter in her hands, begged her to send for the old woman and the Oracle and assure them that unless the money paid for the panel was instantly refunded, we would at once return to Avignon and crush them by a *procès*: and we intended to be as good as our word.

Madame was equal to the occasion. The wicked pair arrived at her bidding and tried to brave it out. They would not return any of the money and would not take back the pistols, which they vowed, by all the black images in all the pilgrim churches, we had bought. But Madame was not to be imposed upon. She came down upon them with all her eloquence, threatened them with unheard-of vengeance, and gave them twenty-four hours to consider the matter. For as she said in her letter to us on the position of affairs: "A *procès* is all very well, monsieur, and no doubt you would gain it, and the wretched couple would be exposed, crushed, ruined and disgraced; but at the cost of infinite trouble and a long journey on your part; *et vraiment le jeu ne valait pas la chandelle.*"

The wicked couple had gone off shaking and quaking in their shoes, for under her torrent of eloquence all their bravado had fled, and they had slunk away blinded by dazzling visions of the law meting out to them solitary confinement or *travaux forcés*. Before the twenty-four hours had expired the Oracle arrived money in hand; humbly gave it over to Madame, who

returned him his pistols and sent him about his business : minus the cost of the journey from England to Avignon, and the duty paid on re-entering the country.

But Madame had put herself to great trouble in the matter. The pistols had remained at the custom-house in a distant town where they had to be cleared. She had written to a friend in that town, who had done all that was needful, paid the duty and forwarded the offending weapons. On receiving our letter she had gone off to consult a friend of hers who was a notary, placing the matter before him and asking his advice ; and there were several other steps to be taken which she went through with great energy and determination : and all to oblige a late guest who had passed only a few days at her house and paid a very modest bill. This was truly acting the part of the Good Samaritan.

To return to the time when we were still in Avignon, reluctantly making up our minds to leave it.

Every day the Rhône was rising higher, and people began to look serious. The floods so dreaded throughout the neighbouring country threatened to overflow : and in point of fact presently did so, to an extent unknown for many years. Madame was grave and anxious the morning of our departure.

"These floods spread devastation for miles around," she said. "The whole Valley of the Rhône suffers more or less. It is pitiable to see the distress that follows. And we can do nothing ; cannot relieve a thousandth part of the misery. It becomes a national matter ; but those afar off seem to have enough to do with their own poor, and are slow to respond. I am sorry, monsieur, that you leave us, but if the floods come, you will be well out of it, and will spare yourselves much heartache."

So we took our leave one fine morning when the water was still rising, and the Rhône, green and sparkling, was rushing through the four arches with a roaring sound of fell purpose, that might well have caused the bones of St. Bénézet to turn in their cold sarcophagus had he still been above them. Our destination was the old town of Orange, and we had wished to go by steamer, but the steamers had been put out of their

ordinary running by the rising waters, and there was no dependence to be placed upon them. So we started by train.

The spires of Avignon and the great towers of the Papal palace stood out sharp and clear against a background of blue sky, as we left the old town behind us: skies calm and peaceful as though there were no rushing rivers below preparing to spread ruin and devastation in their march. In quitting Avignon we were parting from one element which had been present with us ever since we had entered the town: the influence of those picturesque mediæval times that have left their indelible mark upon the world. The other element, inseparable from the whole neighbourhood and the Lower Rhône Valley, still followed us: the influence of the Romans dating back to days far earlier than the Middle Ages. Every place we stopped at bore more or less traces of the rule and power of these masters of the world.

In the journey itself there was nothing specially remarkable. We had separated from the lovely river, which ran its course some miles from the line. Broad green plains were about us, vineyards despoiled of their fruit, orchards equally bare, and undulations that seemed to flow on like the swell of the ocean and lose themselves in the distant mountains. Walking, we should have been constantly reminded of Rome and the days of the Cæsars.

At Carpentras, where the train made a long halt, we were in one of their favourite settlements. Of the Triumphal Arch through which they passed victorious with their armies there still stands a fragment with notable sculptures on the piers. For long it formed part of the Bishops' palace. Perhaps they thought it would add stability to their mitre, this trace of a people almost invincible; but the bishops disappeared and the arch went with them, and nothing but this fragment is left of the ancient glory.

Mediæval remains abound: the Porte d'Orange stands as firmly to-day as when centuries ago it rose stone by stone to its stately perfection. The town of course formed part of the old Papal territory, and so was well fortified: we may still look upon its old feudal walls, towers and gateways; partially ruined and crumbling, it is true, but all the more

beautiful and romantic for these marks of Time's footprints. Here, no doubt, came Petrarch, when he ascended Mont Ventoux, which towers ten miles away into cloudland. It is the great barometer of the country, and when Ventoux is not nightcapped the people tell you to leave your umbrella behind you, for it will not rain.

Bédouin, a small village with gable-roofed cottages, lies at the foot of Ventoux; and here you may hire a mule, or walk up to the top, and revel in the scene and pure air, so light and rarefied that you no longer breathe without effort. Petrarch is said to have ascended from Malaucène, perhaps the only starting-point in his day for the upper regions. It was then a notable excursion: a performance, necessitating an interview with one's father-confessor, making a will and generally setting one's house in order: but in these days of Alpine climbing and Alpine catastrophes the ascent of Ventoux with its 6500 feet is less than child's play. The sensational element of danger is provokingly absent. If it were not for the risk attending these adventures, the Alpine Club might probably close most of its records.

Ventoux is snow-capped quite half the year, and there are summers when the snow never quite disappears. It is a lordly object, standing out against the blue sky, the sun's rays sparkling upon its white spring robes, the summit crowned by a small sixteenth-century chapel dedicated to St. Croix. If the good priests would only invent a miracle or set up a black image, the mule path would soon become picturesque with pilgrims, relieving, it may be, the congested state of the church of Saintes Maries in the Camargue, which provoked the ire of Henri Roger and the regret of the good Curé, and becoming a rival to Lourdes.

From the chapel the view is unequalled. The lovely hills of Dauphiné and Savoy, than which none in the great Alpine chain are more romantic and full of interest, are clearly traced; so are the wild mountains of the Cévennes—*le désert*—more suggestive of rough and rude life, of internal civil and religious warfare and persecution; whilst to the left again lies Auvergne, with its extinct volcanoes and hot springs.

Here again we trace the course of the majestic Rhône and

its sister river the Duranse, the latter so dear to the hearts of those born and bred within sound of its flowing. Here stood Petrarch, his mind and heart no doubt filled with the image of Laura. Afar off, if not actually visible, were the groves in which they wandered together, and which her spirit is said to have haunted ever since. No doubt he indulged in the sweet luxury of sadness, mixed with some shadow of remorse as his past selfishness stood out before him in its true colours. Many an unavailing sigh must have gone out into space, many a wish to recall the past. Who is without such sighs and wishes?

It was a short journey to Orange, and soon over. The ancient town lies in a wide plain, through which flows the winding Rhône. Here again we are in the midst of Roman remains: a magnificent Amphitheatre; a Triumphal Arch, which from a distance looks perfect and untouched; and only on one side proves, on a nearer inspection, to have been very much restored.

The Amphitheatre is in the very centre of the town; the Arch stands well and boldly some distance down the long, broad, straight, tree-lined road leading to Valence; a splendid time-worn monument, its golden tone partly due to age, a vivid and beautiful picture against the blue sky, which again is framed in by the perfect arch. The whole has a wonderfully rich and startling effect, less suggestive of antiquity than of eternal youth.

Approaching, one sees that the reliefs are of great merit: groups of figures, naval scenes full of detail; masts, yards, anchors, shrouds, such as might have belonged to Roman galleys: but many of the scenes are not to be interpreted; there is no modern Daniel to do this: their meaning is lost in the obscurity of the ages. In one panel a female is holding her hand to her ear, a symbol that has puzzled succeeding generations. Had the finger been placed on the lips, the meaning would have been clearer. There the archway stands for ever, a splendid monument to the glory of Rome. The word MARIO is traced on some of its panels, and it is supposed that the Arch was built by Marcus Aurelius, to commemorate his successes on the Danube and in Germany. Again, it has been supposed to refer to Marius and his victory over the

Cimbri, but as Triumphal Arches were not known before the Cæsars, this apparently falls to the ground.

The Amphitheatre is, as we have just said, in the centre of the town: it is a gigantic monument, and the market is held under the very shadow of its walls.

To-day was market day, and the place was crowded with all manner of people and every variety of stall; the air was full of the sound of buyers and sellers. The contrast between the ancient walls, that had seen nearly 2000 years roll away, and the modern element was curious and startling. For the people were not particularly interesting. We looked in vain for such types of beauty as are found amongst the women of Arles. There was no beauty here, but a very commonplace element: women with loud voices and no refinement of feature, no grace of form. More than ever we thought the women of Arles a mystery.

To pass from this modern, chattering crowd into the interior of the Amphitheatre was to pass at a bound out of the nineteenth century into the first or second. It lies at the foot of a hill, and the hillside was excavated into a semicircle of seats, range above range, where the Romans sat out their bull-fights and gladiatorial games, just as to-day they carry on the tradition in Spain. Overlooking these was the Citadel, built by the Romans, which in time passed over to the Princes of Orange, and was finally destroyed by Louis XIV.

As we have said, the walls of the Amphitheatre are colossal, shutting out the world, all its sights and sounds: on one side the vast range of semicircular seats, overlooking the immense arena, on the other the huge walls; above all, the blue sky: nothing visible to remind one that within a few yards beat modern human hearts, living in a very modern human hive. These walls are 120 feet high, 340 feet long, 13 feet in thickness. The enormous blocks of the semicircle are fitted together without cement, of which the great Roman builders were independent. Unseen passages intersect them. A great awning was stretched over the scene in those bygone days, almost as gigantic and wonderful as the building itself. On one of the blocks the inscription may still be read, Eq: C: III., meaning the Knights' Third Row.

Close by was the Circus where the sports were less cruel. Nothing of this remains but broken and melancholy arches. Maurice of Nassau brought it to ruin, for no other reason than the eternal love of destruction, and but for him the Amphitheatre would be far more perfect than it is.

As we were about to pass out, the old door-keeper, who took the small charge demanded for admission, appeared on the scene with a great green parrot perched upon his wrist. The custodian looked more time-worn than the walls and he must have read our thoughts, for he said at once :

"Yes ; I am eighty ; and a man of eighty is by comparison older than a brick wall of 2000 years."

"No doubt you have had a hard life," we observed ; "you look careworn, and care killed a cat."

"And you may have had a shrewish wife," said H. C., harping upon the everlasting theme ; exactly as though he were going about the world collecting evidence pro and con : and according to the final result intended to join the rank of Benedicks, or for ever become a misogynist. The truth being that he was to one heart constant never ; running from one lovely face to another, as the bee flies from flower to flower, extracting as much sweet honey as he could gather, and moving on to the next.

"A wife ?" said the old man ; "no, I never married ; never could afford to marry. Thank goodness I escaped that calamity. I was engaged once when I was eighteen : but she died in less than a year. Perhaps we shall marry in heaven."

"There are no marriages in heaven," said H. C. severely. "All such ties will be dissolved in the next world."

The old man shrugged his shoulders. "Pardon me, monsieur, but I think you know very little about it. At any rate, we shall be friends, if nothing more. Here I have been for years. Life is dull enough in this sleepy old town, except on Saturdays, when it suddenly wakes up to animation, and the market is full of carts and stalls and people, and they come and chatter with me the whole morning through. If it were not for these market days I should long since have died of *ennui*."

Here the parrot flapped its wings and craned its neck up and down and seemed to think itself a neglected quantity.

"César!" it screamed, flapping its wings. "Je suis César!"

"And I believe it," cried the old man. "I verily believe the spirit of Cæsar or some other warrior haunts the bird. Nothing daunts it; neither man nor animal. It would face a lion and fight it. Six times over in my life have I given it a companion parrot. On each occasion the next morning the new bird has lain dead at the bottom of the cage, and César has stood gazing at it with flapping wings and glaring eyes, looking a perfect demon. He is possessed; I am sure he is possessed."

"How old is the bird?"

Again the old man shrugged his shoulders. "I am eighty," he said, "and my parents had it long before I was born. I daresay it is 200 years old—or 2000 for that matter. Perhaps it was alive in the days of Cæsar. It will be here long after I am gone; in fact I don't believe it will ever die."

"César!" screamed the bird, flapping its wings, and really looking as though it had something of a demon about it. "Je suis César! Gard' à toi, mon fioux!"

The old man boxed its head, and the bird pecked at his sleeve and tore a shred out of the coat—which might have seen sixty years of service.

"Gard' à toi!" cried the bird; and with a perfectly unearthly, ear-piercing shriek, it spread its wings and flew back to its abode: the little cupboard of a room that the custodian inhabited almost underground.

"Are you not afraid of losing it?" we asked, seeing the bird with unclipped wings.

"No," replied the bird's master. "Nothing would persuade him to go away. Sometimes I almost wish he would, and rid me of the bother and expense of keeping him. Once someone took a fancy to him and asked me to give him to them. 'Take him, cage and all,' I said, smiling to myself; and so they did. They lived two streets off. Away they went with the cage, as pleased as Polichinelle. 'Gard' à toi!' screamed the bird, all the way down the street. 'Gard' à toi!' They put him into their *salon* for the night. The next morning they went in to

have a friendly interview with the bird. Sapristi! the deluge! Ruin and devastation! The cage was on the ground, the door open; how he opened it, no one ever knew. Curtains, chifcons, all torn to shreds; little biblots lying on the ground, some smashed, others cracked; books with leaves and covers torn; in short a general sacking and destruction—but no bird! They searched every hole and crevice of the room—in vain. The creature had gone up the chimney and came back to me as black as a crow, and looking like a veritable diable incarnate. He shrieked with laughter, until I was convulsed myself to hear him. Perfectly well he knew what he had done. ‘Gard’ à toi!’ he shrieked. ‘César! Je suis César!’ And then he went off into shriek after shriek of laughter again. The cage came back, but it was the very last time that I was asked to give him away or even to lend him.”

“Can he say nothing else? The one phrase over and over again must become a little monotonous.”

“Nothing else, monsieur?” cried the old man: “why he talks like a Christian for all he’s a demon; holds long conversations with me; chapter and verse; and what’s more, he understands. It’s as clear as daylight that he understands. If I’m at my dinner and don’t give him just what he likes, he swears at me till my blood almost freezes; swears like a Chr—— that is, I should say, like a demon: words escape one by accident. *Merci, monsieur*,” as we slipped a little *douceur* into the withered old hand. “*Merci*: I will drink to your health. And I assure you that if I don’t give a little of it to that bird, he will let me have no peace. He is quite a judge, too, and the finer the cognac, the more he likes it. A *canard* is his great weakness, but if I give it him before I have put the cognac into the coffee, he throws down the sugar, flaps his wings, screeches enough to take off the roof of your head, and swears horribly. No one need tell me that that bird does not know and understand everything that’s going forward.”

We had to pass the room—about four feet square—to get out. It contained the man’s whole ménage: bed, stove, chair, table, cupboard for larder and pantry, and perch for Cæsar. The cage had been discarded some time ago.

We looked in. The bird was slipping about the table, which

was covered with oil-cloth and, like a waxed floor, was difficult to walk upon; and it really looked—in the language of the Police Reports—very drunk and disorderly. Seeing us, it put its head on one side with a very maudlin expression, and flapping its wings, closed them suddenly and began a verse of the Marseillaise. It went through the whole verse without a flaw, for all the world, as the old man said, as though it understood every word and thoroughly appreciated the Republican spirit of the song. Then with a shriek, and a final “Je suis César! Gard’ à toi, mon fioux!” it suddenly collapsed on to its back, turned up its claws, shook them as though in convulsions, and closing its eyes, turned stiff and rigid.

The old custodian was in ecstasies.

“Have you ever seen the like!” he cried. “Now he is acting, and I never saw him do it better. No Christian could do it better. I defy Sarah Bernhardt to equal that bird in a dying scene. There he’ll stay for three or four minutes, and then he’ll suddenly resuscitate, shake his feathers, and shriek with laughter. Well, monsieur, if you must depart there is nothing left for me but to wish you bon voyage when you set out again on your travels.”

We went back into the modern world feeling we had assisted at the first act of a very fine comedy. The bird haunted one, and we were almost inclined to agree with the old custodian, and to think the creature possessed by an evil spirit.

The country carts, which had come in laden, were ranged against the old walls of the Amphitheatre; in front of them were the stalls with flowers and fruit, onions, butter, poultry and cream tarts—such tarts as the *paysans* make and love in their villages: and excellent they are.

Here again the artistic pottery was lying on straw on the ground, and again we regretted our inability to ship a cargo to England.

“We are terribly behind these people,” said H. C. fondling a water-jug as though it had been a pet kitten. “But for truly inartistic people, without sense of colour or conception of the beautiful, commend me to the English. One could weep over it with pleasure, if all one’s tears had not been dried up in weeping over one’s own sins.”

He was thinking of all the fines Lady Maria had paid out for him ; of his gentle walks beside her bath-chair, when he cast down his eyes and looked at his toes as every pretty girl and woman passed, and then sneaked a moment behind the chair to look back and admire a graceful carriage or light and airy foot-step. And again there came the thought of countless promises made and broken, tears shed that would have filled an ocean, shattered hearts living, like a cracked vase, in daily possibility of utter destruction.

He put down the jug he was caressing, and we went to the other side of the market-place and looked upon the incongruous scene : the modern market crowded with the uninteresting men and women of to-day, backed by those colossal walls that had frowned upon the joys and sorrows of humanity for well-nigh 2000 years. Perhaps nowhere else could one look upon so contradictory a picture. For as we have said, the town is of great antiquity. It was the Arausio of the Ancients : or rather Arausio stood upon the site of the Orange of to-day.

With the exception of its remains, the new town is commonplace enough. Narrow streets have taken the place of what was once full of picturesque outlines.

Its history is somewhat far-fetched and complicated. The family of Nassau bore the name of Orange, and so to us, it is very familiar. But how many associate the title borne by the eldest son of the House of Holland with this almost unknown, unfrequented town in the Lower Valley of the Rhône ? Who indeed ever breaks his journey, even for a few hours, to gaze upon the wonderful relics of the past, the splendid Roman monuments that here live out their days in comparative obscurity ?

The name of Orange was borne by the House of Nassau. It formed the chief town of a small principality belonging to the de Baux, the first of whom, Raimbault de Baux, was killed at the siege of Antioch in 1099. . These were days when the Roman rule had passed away and been forgotten, though its glorious monuments were still standing, as they are standing to-day. The centuries rolled on until the year 1531, when Philibert de Chalons died, leaving no other heir than his sister, who had married the Prince of Nassau Dillingen. Then when William III.

of England—great and capable monarch—died, the King of Prussia claimed Orange as a descendant of the princes of Nassau-Orange. The principality was made over to the King of France in exchange for a substantial *quid pro quo*; in the possession of France it has since remained; and probably no one—not even Germany—would wish to take it from her.

But thus it comes to pass that any male heir to the throne of Holland bears an empty title, and has probably never even set eyes upon the town whence that title is derived: the capital of the old principality through which the Rhône takes its majestic course.

But Orange is not actually built on the Rhône. It lies on the Meyne, a small and more peaceful stream, that never dreams of rising above a certain height, has never been known to overflow and ruin its neighbours' vineyards.

The Meyne takes its way through the plains like a small silver thread, whilst its great rival rushes onwards in strength and triumph three miles away. The plain here is wide and not very rich in appearance, whilst the few trees visible, olives and willows that reach to no great height, give them a melancholy aspect. The land is not unfruitful, but its yieldings are not of a nature to add to the beauty of a landscape, which owes its charm, as a rule, to luxuriant hedges, spreading oaks and elms, flowering chestnuts and silver beeches: features here, as in most parts of France, conspicuous by their absence. There is little beauty in French vineyards, and when the waving corn has been cut and carried—as it had long been when we looked out upon these plains—a dreary waste of ploughed land remains through the pale winter months of the year.

A very pretty river or canal runs through the town, and small houses built upon its banks find their reflections in the calm water. On market days the little bridge spanning it is alive with a procession of native carts, and their drivers in blue blouses or some other dress of the country—there is little real *costume*—whip up their lazy horses or slow going oxen, in vain efforts to reach the market-place at the stroke of the hour.

If a woman is the charioteer, the cavalcade is more attractive; for though she be not fair to see, there is a greater

softness about her than about the rough, unshaven, heavily shod husband or brother, and her head is enveloped in a bright handkerchief which adds colouring to the scene, and has a certain grace of its own. Beneath it the white cap is just visible, and the neatly arranged hair, whilst a gold chain prominently displayed proclaims the respectability of the owner. Throughout France, next to their honour, the women of the country—paysans, small farmers' wives—cherish their jewellery.

Modern Orange has, we have said, very little to recommend it. We saw it under the advantages of market day, when it was fairly lively and bustling: but it was evident that for the five other working days of the week it goes to sleep. The one solitary square was given up to the fruit stalls, corn, stuffs and woollens. Here, too, there was more artistic pottery, to drive H. C. wild with art worship. Just round the corner and almost within sight and sound of the stall-holders we came upon an old curiosity shop, and of course entered it.

But this old curiosity shop near the old square at Orange appeared, like a good deal of the town itself, neglected and poverty stricken. There was no animation about it, but a distinctly pathetic air. It looked as though a five-franc piece might buy up the whole contents, and no great bargain would be made. All the same we went in.

The little bell tinkled and a young and comely woman answered the summons. A very different goddess, this, from the old Avignon dragon. She at least would not despise her wares, and they had far more than a mere surface value. Their antiquities dated back to the days of the Romans, their genuineness was as undoubted as though stamped with the date of the period. The bell tinkled again and the husband came in; a young, good-looking man; and neither husband nor wife had any signs of the ordinary over-reaching antiquarian about them. Somehow we felt profoundly sorry for them. Here was possibly a romance in humble life. They had married out of pure love for each other; imprudently, no doubt; with no present prospects, but trusting for something to turn up in the future. How could they possibly keep body and soul together by the returns of such a collection? It must be not living, but starvation; and there was a certain air about the wife: a sort of

assumed cheerfulness, an apparent anxiety to make the most of things : that seemed to argue a wish to hide the truth from the world—or so we imagined.

In the end we concluded that we had exaggerated the skeleton in the cupboard ; they were not as badly off as we fancied. It was evident that love had not flown out at the window, so that poverty could not have come in at the door.

We went through the collection and bought sundry antiquities ; amongst them an old glass plate and an old glass vase, both dating back to the first century ; both Roman ; both dug out of the earth not very far from Orange. The iridescent colours were exquisite ; the shape of the vase was ravishing, and if it had lost one handle, by turning that side a little away, the defect was hidden. It is true the husband warned us not to wash them : in spite of which warning, on our return home, we soaked the plate in hot water, washed it, and dried it in the sun : thus following the example of a lady-friend who possessed a Sir Joshua valued at some thousands.

One morning a brilliant idea struck her. She was tired of its sombre tone, due she felt sure to the fogs of London ; and to improve this applied hot water, soapsuds and a nail brush with all the strength of her delicate hands. Encouraged by the dirty look of the water, she gave it a second application : or, as she called it, “ a rinsing.”

It was dried and put back, and proud of her achievement yet with a certain uneasy sensation about the heart, she summoned her art-critic from Pall Mall—whose word in the picture world is law—to come and admire her handiwork and give his opinion upon the result.

“ Madam,” replied the great critic as though pronouncing the doom of the world : “ Madam, when I last saw that Sir Joshua, I would have given you a cheque for it for £6000. To-day it would be dear at a £100 note. You have simply ruined your picture—and blotted out your ancestress into the bargain. It was one of the loveliest Sir Joshuas ever seen.”

Our plate, fortunately, was not worth £6000, but the result was the same—its beauty had vanished. The peculiar green tone was there ; it still bore an unmistakable look of age ; but the iridescence had disappeared ; the charm had dissolved in

the hot water, and we realised the wisdom of following good advice. Happily we had practised on the plate only, and after the discouraging result left the vase severely alone. It still charms by its beautiful form, incrustations of dirt, and rainbow hues. We are quite sure that it goes back to the days of the Romans.

We felt so interested in the young husband and wife that, our purchases made and satisfactorily adjusted, we asked them a little of themselves, their life, hopes and possibilities.

"You have not been long married, of course," we said, for even now they looked next door to boy and girl.

"I don't know, monsieur," replied the wife. "We have been married nine years. All the same it is a slice out of one's life."

"Nine years! You must have married when you were children."

"Not quite that," she laughed, "but we were not very far off; and I don't think we had much wisdom to begin marriage upon. Jules, there, was nineteen and I was seventeen. Life is very much as you take it. I don't think we have been unhappy, have we, Jules?"

"If we had our time to come over again we should do just the same," promptly replied the husband. "I can't think what people are made of who are dissatisfied with the world, and don't make the best of it. It seems a very good world to me, and if I live to be a hundred I shall not be tired of it—that is, Marie, if you are at my side," with a glance of genuine affection at his wife.

"But how can you make a living out of this?" giving a general look round at the collection.

"It is worth more than you would suppose, monsieur," said Madame Marie. "We sell more than you would imagine, and make a good deal of profit on what we do sell," she candidly admitted. "If more people came to Orange—travellers on their way to and from the Midi—we should do very well. But nobody comes here; not one traveller in ten thousand; and our beautiful Roman antiquities—such as these—and our splendid Roman monuments—such as the amphitheatre in the town, and the triumphal arch outside—the Porte de Valence—languish

out their days in neglected solitude. For what do the market folk and the paysans and the townspeople care for antiquities? To them they are so much stone and brickwork—*ni plus, ni moins*."

Madame Marie had worked herself up to enthusiasm; the colour mounted to her face and her bright brown eyes sparkled.

"But all you say rather argues against you. If so few people come to Orange, how can you sell your antiquities? And if you don't sell, how can you make both ends meet at the end of the year?"

"Oh, we sell; we do sell—to a certain extent," replied Madame Marie. "Not so much as we could wish; not even enough to make a small fortune; but all the same we sell. And then," smiling, "we have a nest-egg to fall back upon. We are not entirely dependent upon our business for our daily bread. I have a *rente* of 2500 francs a year, and with that we manage very well. Ah," she cried, "I see what you are thinking"—for it certainly flashed through our mind that after all they had not been as imprudent as we had imagined, and that Monsieur Jules had done well for himself; 2500 francs a year was quite a rich dowry for one in her position. "I see what you are thinking, *monsieur*; but you are wrong. When we married I did not possess any dot. We had been married two years before this came to me, quite unexpectedly; from an old lady living at Vaison, and no one had any idea that she was so rich—for she left me only a small portion of her wealth. She used to come to Orange and lodge at my father's, and I paid her little attentions and did all I could for her, for I really loved Mademoiselle Marthe, as we used to call her. She grew very attached to me, and when she died, to my astonishment and delight I came into quite a fortune."

"But how did it go the first two years of your marriage? Did you not think you had acted imprudently and like a couple of children, expecting a miracle to happen?"

"Well, the miracle did happen," laughed Madame Marie. "And if it had not, I confess I don't know where we should have been. The first year it went pretty well; but the second, when my baby was born, and expenses increased and funds did

not, then we began to lie awake at night and wonder what was to be done. Suddenly came the fortune, and oh, life has been bright ever since."

"Blessings on Mademoiselle Marthe's memory. If she knows what happiness she has conferred upon you, it might almost tempt her to revisit the scenes of her earthly pilgrimage."

"Hush!" said Madame Marie, her voice falling to a whisper. "She has done so. On two different occasions I have seen her since she died."

"Ma chère——" began the husband.

"Jules, it's of no use talking," interrupted Madame Marie. "My husband would persuade me that it is all illusion; that I dreamed it," she added, turning to us. "But I was as wide awake as I am now; and I saw her as plainly as I see you, monsieur."

"Was it here?" we asked.

"No; she was never in this house; it was only after she died that we took it. It was in my father's house, and in the room she used to occupy when she came to Orange. On each occasion I have gone upstairs without even thinking of her; and there in the middle of the room she has stood, in her black silk dress and white lace cap, looking, just as she always looked in life, quite the grande dame."

"Has she seemed troubled or unhappy?"

"Quite the contrary," asserted Madame Marie. "Her face both times wore a look of complete repose: of what I should almost call rapture. The first time was immediately after her death; I did not even know she was gone. 'Mademoiselle Marthe!' I cried. 'Have you come to Orange, and without letting me know?' And then I advanced to give and receive the kiss we always exchanged in meeting. Before I could reach her—in what manner I know not—she had disappeared. I was bewildered, frightened. The next day we heard of her death, and I of my good fortune. Poor Mademoiselle Marthe," cried Madame Marie, with tears in her eyes and voice; "she so often told me I had committed an imprudence in getting married so young and with nothing to fall back upon."

"And the second time?" we asked, much interested in this kindly ghost.

"The second time was just a year afterwards," said Madame Marie. "It was the anniversary of her death; but for all that I was not thinking of her as I went upstairs in my father's house. I was indeed thinking only of him, for he was ill in bed, and in less than a month after, he died. Well, on my way up I turned unconsciously, quite without thinking, into Mademoiselle Marthe's old room; and there she stood in the middle of it, in her black silk dress and white lace cap, looking just as I had seen her hundreds of times in life; the same sweet smile and calm expression of repose. Somehow I didn't feel in the least alarmed. We stood looking at each other for a full minute, I rooted to the spot; then her hand was raised as though beckoning to me, or as if she would have blessed or embraced me; and then, as before, she suddenly faded; how I could not tell; it was as noiseless and intangible as a shadow passing away from a house when the sun comes out. I can give it no other description."

"It is very singular," we remarked, for want of something better to say.

"And to me very solemn," added Madame Marie. "And now I have got it into my head that whenever one of us dies, child or parent, Mademoiselle Marthe will appear. For within a month of my seeing her the first time, my mother died: and within a month of the second occasion my father died."

"That is a mere nervous feeling," we said; "and after all is mere conjecture; for——"

"No, monsieur, not nerves at all," interrupted Madame Marie. "I am not in the least nervous about it, or concerned, or even dwell upon it. If it is to be so, let it be so. I loved Mademoiselle Marthe in life, and I am certainly not going to fear her now that she has gone to a better world. There is no purgatory for such people as Mademoiselle Marthe; I am quite convinced of that. Not all the priests in France would make me believe it; not the Pope himself. But if she appears again for any one I hope it will be for me, for it would kill me to lose my husband and children."

"You have children, then?"

"A boy and two girls, monsieur; quite enough to provide

for in these hard times ; we don't want any more. And here come the little girls, home from school."

As she spoke two very pretty children, apparently about six and seven years old, rushed into the shop, and smothered their mother with embraces. They were evidently the pride of their parents' heart, for the father looked on with fond admiration ; and they were well cared for and neatly dressed. As soon as the embraces were over they both rushed off to regions invisible, calling out they hoped dinner was ready for they were dying of hunger.

"And where's the boy?" we asked, as the little girls disappeared and peace was restored ; calm succeeding the whirlwind.

"Ah," cried Madame Marie, with a flash of pride ; "you should see my boy. He is the eldest, and truly the pearl of the necklace. He dines at school and only comes home at night. We are ambitious, monsieur, for our boy. He talks with so much wisdom ; twice the sense of his years ; and if the world prospers with us, we want to make him an avocat. Why not ? In these Republican days it is all *liberté, égalité, fraternité* : and if he has the wisdom, the fact that his parents are antiquarians need not prevent his becoming President of the Republic."

"Ma chère," cried the husband, "your ambition will be your ruin. One of these days you will *dégringoler* like a house of cards."

"You are very mixed," laughed madame ; "a house of cards collapses ; doesn't *dégringoler* at all. Fancy a house of cards running down hill ! But you mistake me. I am not in the least ambitious. I would far rather le petit Jules became a great pleader than President of the Republic, to be shot at, perhaps, like poor Monsieur Carnot. And I would sooner he became a good man than a great man. I have only a lawful ambition for him ; nothing more."

Our purchases—the ancient glass, and the ancient classical lamps, that were really beautiful and no doubt belonged to the days of the Cæsars—were to be packed carefully and sent to the Hôtel de la Poste et des Princes. It stood in a quiet street, in which apparently the noise and crowd of the market never

penetrated. Yet, as we turned into it, a small crowd had collected very near the hotel and we wondered what had happened: whether flood or fire. It was neither one nor the other, but a motor carriage, well built, and looking extremely comfortable. They were more rare in those days than now, though it is only three years ago. Two gentlemen sat in it, one of them driving, and we ventured to ask how he fared.

"Nothing could be better or more enjoyable," he replied. "We have been going about for a fortnight now without a single misadventure, and this morning have already done sixty miles. If you are going our way, pray allow me to offer you a seat."

But we had to decline the favour. The carriage went its way, turning the corner smoothly and beautifully, a tail of boys after it, and we entered the hotel. It proved comfortable and every one was civil and attentive; the landlord surveyed our case when it arrived, we told him what it held, and where we had bought it. Was it likely to be genuine?

"Yes," he replied, "I should certainly say so. They are brave people, those two; every one trusts them and respects them. And they are not altogether dependent upon their business either. Now at Avignon I should advise caution: one might trust too much." We had yet to learn the truth of his words.

"These people complain of want of custom," we said. "They would do well if more people visited the town."

"That is true enough—so should we," returned the landlord with fellow-feeling. "Few people come to Orange. Its merits are not known; and after all, it is not everyone who cares sufficiently for Roman remains, even such as we possess, to take the trouble to break their journey, whether going north or south. If it were not for the commercial travellers, the proprietaires round about, and a few people of the provinces, we might close our doors and retire: only unhappily not on a fortune: not to a villa embowered in roses," he laughed, "but the more humble Hospice Civile."

"Mon cher," responded his wife, who stood by, "even that would be better than l'hospice des aliénés."

"The one would lead to the other," laughed the husband,

with a shrug of the shoulders : " and at the best only a very fine line separates the two."

The omnibus came up, and we concluded our short but not unpleasant acquaintance with the Hôtel des Princes—whether princes of Orange, Nassau, or some other principality, we forgot to inquire. We almost regretted leaving the old town, and yet, though we had only spent a morning there, we had seen all that was worth doing : the Triumphal Arch, the Amphitheatre, Monsieur Jules and Madame Marie ; the Hôtel des Princes, and last but not least, César the possessed and the old custodian.

The omnibus drew up at a house, from which there issued a resplendent bride and bridegroom, the former carrying an immense bouquet, the latter holding the inevitable valise, without which the Frenchman en voyage is seldom seen. They entered the omnibus and took up one whole side, looking not in the smallest degree conscious or embarrassed, but supremely proud and happy : so calm and collected, they might have been married every day for a year past. We gathered from their expressions—"Ma reine" from the one, "Mon amour" from the other—that they were very much in love with each other—as in duty bound : and from their general conversation that they were about to spend a month in Paris, where not a theatre was to be left unvisited ; it was to be a veritable *lune de miel*.

Then we arrived at the station and separated, to meet no more. H. C. was full of sighs ; his visage had lengthened like an afternoon shadow. "She was really very pretty," he murmured ; "much too good for him." But as we had thought them very well matched, this was nothing but rank jealousy. Our own destination was not Paris, but Montélimar, a few stations off. Only a few days before, we had received the following letter from E., who had evidently not grown a day older since, years ago, we had burnt the midnight oil in writing our chronicles to her from Majorca the beautiful.

"As you are in the neighbourhood of Montélimar," said the letter, "pray stop there and lay in a large supply of *nougat*. Do you remember how it was our favourite confection in those bygone days, when like the Princess Amelia, 'we laughed and talked and danced and sang, and thought the world was made for us ?' And if disappointments and disillusion have come,

nougat finds no place amongst them. I have as great a weakness for it as ever—if weakness it be: and where will you find it so good and so faultless as in the town which, as far as I know, is famous only for one thing—the manufacture of the said nougat. And what further fame could it need? I think I may venture to affirm that Chocolat Menier and Nougat de Montélimar are more widely known than the merits of Rome the Magnificent or Venice the Beautiful, and much more appreciated. Therefore to pass Montélimar without alighting would be a crime only punishable with—shall I say abstention for ever after from all good things?”

A request from E. is equal to a royal command; therefore that letter decided our movements so far: and to Montélimar we were bound.

And now, beloved reader, to take you a little into our confidence, and explain why these latter pages are shorn of what, no doubt, has hitherto been the chief merit of the work. It is simply that when they were being written, sketches and photographs had gone astray, and no offered bribe or reward ever brought them to light again.

An old friend, and much valued, was staying with us at the time making *la pluie et le beau temps* of our days: and we excused a close attendance upon our study on the plea of “copy,” for which the printers’ devil was waiting in the servants’ hall and using strong language. “But, there can be no illustrations,” we added.

“Oh!” they cried, lifting hands in objection, whilst the nearest approach to a frown ever seen on their face flitted across it like the shadow of an angel’s wing passing over the sun: “Oh! but if there are no pictures it will be good for nothing. I must have pictures!”

It is only the truth that is painful, and this sent us back to our sanctum crushed, gloomy, and depressed: half extinguished.

Will you indorse that terrible verdict, and complete the annihilation? It is no doubt deserved; but if we all had our deserts, which of us would stand exactly in the place he now occupies?

## CHAPTER XIV.

Crossing the Ardèche—The Château de Grignan—Châteauneuf—First mulberry-tree—Home of the silkworm—The Magnaneries—Montélimar—Dull town—Rival establishments—Heavy purchases—A goddess of Ambrosia—A mystery—Château de Malvoisie—Gaining entrance—"C'est bien vous, Adèle?"—Insane laughter—Terrified keeper—Admitted by accident—More insane laughter—Cannon balls—A perplexed guardian—"The mischief is done"—"It means madness"—Surprise on our part—Adèle at last—Severe lecture—Rare treasures—Sad story and interesting patient—Strange recovery—Another dragon—H. C. at a disadvantage—Successful trading—At the station—Race with time—St. Péray—Valence—Crossing the lovely Isère—St. Étienne—Vienne—Presentiments—The town overflowing—"Try the Hôtel du Paradis"—Mysterious reputation—Suspicious arrival—Gigantic host—"Another Bluebeard"—H. C. collapses—Cadaverous waiter—Dutch courage—Endless passages—Plot thickens—The witching hour—Strange awakening—Mysterious apparition—Shot in the dark—Confusion—The next morning—Waiter transformed—Landlord an amiable elephant—A remarkable town—Roman remains—Cathedral—Splendid west front—Leaving the hotel—Landlord amazed—Grateful waiter—H. C. has a further presentiment—Of an agreeable character—His last appearance in public—Good-bye to the Rhône.

THE train steamed away from Orange.

For the happy bride and bridegroom in a compartment all to themselves the moments were doubtless flying on golden wings. We were sorry to say good-bye to the old town, with all its traditions and Roman remains, which seemed to loom out of the landscape as the train rolled leisurely through the country. Again we saw and heard the old custodian bending in ecstasy over his dying bird: again saw the leering eyes and flapping wings of the old parrot, heard its shrill protest, "*Je suis César!*" and more than ever felt inclined to believe it possessed of an evil spirit.

What was the explanation, we asked ourselves, of the ghost Madame Marie had seen? That it was mere illusion seemed

impossible; and again the words of Dr. Johnson recurred to the memory: "Reason may be against the theory, but reason cannot stand against the overwhelming weight of evidence in its favour." No; whatever the solution of the incident, it did not exist merely in Madame Marie's imagination. But the landscape threw no light upon the subject.

The train passed on in the sunshine of the early afternoon. Mulberry and olive trees threw their quaint shadows upon the ground, the latter far less frequent than on the other side of Avignon. The mulberries help to sustain the silkworm for the mills of Aubenas—that town celebrated for truffles and ortolans. We were still in the midst of Roman influences and remains. Ruined castles stood upon high and perpendicular rocks, boldly outlined against the sky. Villages slept under their shadow in the plains—Montdragon and Mornas.

We crossed the Ardèche at Bollène, where fragments of the old Roman walls are still visible. At Pierrelatte the broad, bold calcareous rock rose out of the plain to a height of four hundred feet; St. Paul not far away, with its ancient remains, its curious twelfth-century cathedral and early frescoes. Not so very far off again is the Château de Grignan, where Madame de Sévigné spent so many of her days, and to which in her letters she so constantly alludes. It lies above the town of Donzère, and being on a height was a mark for the revolutionists, who spare nothing. The library and picture-gallery are worth a long and careful inspection. Both are extremely interesting: and in the library the ghost of Madame de Sévigné—that "*belle marquise, pleine d'esprit, mais tout-à-fait sans cœur*"—might well walk, for it was her favourite apartment, and here she spent much of her time. Here she died, having reached the full age allotted to man, and here in 1696 she was buried. The black stone marking the entrance to the family vault was removed when, a century later, the troubles of the Revolution set in, and so the mob overlooked the tomb, and the ashes of many who lay there were not disturbed.

Near Châteauneuf, our next station, the first mulberry-tree planted in France was brought there by Guy de St. Auban, who in 1494 had accompanied Charles VIII. on his Italian campaign.

He little dreamed of the good he was doing to future generations. The whole neighbourhood, extending far south, became the home of the silkworm, giving rise to an industry which has changed the face of the country. In days gone by we have visited many a magnanerie—as they call the places where the silkworms are reared—in the Dauphiné, whose range of hills may be seen in the distance across the plains, terminating in the famous Mont Ventoux.

Nothing can be more interesting than to watch the hatching process—which is the same in every establishment. Sheets of perforated paper are laid upon the eggs, mulberry-leaves are suspended above. The little worms, leaving the shell, guided by the sense of smell or instinct, climb through the holes and fasten themselves upon the leaves. The worms have four periods of change: live in a state of larvæ for thirty-four days, and shed their skin four times. Each change of skin marks a changed condition. Before the change, they become torpid and cease to eat: after the change they eat ravenously, the appetite increasing as each skin is shed. The worms produced from an ounce of eggs will eat seven pounds of leaves during the first period, and as much as three hundred pounds during the last. In this fourth period the noise they make in eating is like the sound of sharp-falling rain. After ten days they cease to eat and begin to spin their cocoons, which take about four days to perfect. This is the end of their life! To prevent the worms from biting their way through the cocoons they are thrown into a copper filled with steam: the worms are stifled, and the silk is ready for winding.

Another six miles through the plains of Ardèche, and Montélimar was reached. No need to shout the name of the station. On the platform were half-a-dozen men and boys hawking piles of nougat done up in boxes of every size; and “Nougat de Montélimar! Voyez, goûtez, messieurs et dames!” rose upon the air from a chorus of voices.

Here we got down, in obedience to E.’s commands.

The whole train seemed to patronise these persistent sellers, and the happy bride and bridegroom especially bought a supply that was certainly meant to last them all through the Parisian *lune de miel*. Then the signal for departure

was given, the horn was blown, and away rolled the train northwards.

We turned to the town, wondering what we should find. We knew it possessed an ancient pedigree, dating back to the days of Charlemagne, but knew little more about this old place famous for its nougat.

We had never heard of anyone stopping here out of curiosity. And with good reason, as we soon discovered. It was the dullest, dreariest town in existence. The streets were deserted. One might have fired a cannon down the Grande Rue and nothing would have suffered excepting a little dislodged dust from the windows. Every trace of antiquity had disappeared.

Modern houses and boulevards have been built where stood the ancient walls. Some of the old gates remain, it is true, but ingenuity has racked its brains for the best means of concealing or destroying them. A more deadly-lively spot could not be imagined. Where the 16,000 inhabitants bestowed themselves was a mystery. Perhaps they were all down below, in unseen regions, manufacturing nougat—for every other shop seemed established for the purpose of selling it. And according to an announcement in every window, each individual shop was the original establishment and all others were base imitators: reminding one of the eau-de-Cologne shops in that other odorous town on the banks of the Rhine.

The nougat shops were empty of customers; and as we passed, the keepers came to their doors to watch the unusual procession of two, meandering down the street in a vain attempt to find an old house or a quaint outline to reward them for their visit.

We entered what looked the best and most enticing shops, and in each case the sellers abused their neighbours. They alone had the veritable "nougat de Montélimar" whose fame had gone out into the world: all others were spurious imitators. And so, unable to discriminate—we should have made ourselves sick, as they say of the children, if we had eaten all that was offered us by way of sample—we bought a little here and a little there, until we were afraid of growing notorious, as well as heavy-laden.

In each case we left our purchases "to be called for," on our

way back to the station: and after anxious inquiries for curiosities and antiquities, were advised to climb to the Château de Malvoisie.

"I know of nothing else," said the good woman who gave us this counsel. "It is a mile and a half from the town, but it is worth a visit."

She was a small, vivacious woman, with a pale thin face and bright black eyes that seemed to glance all ways at once and take in everything. A coquettish cap with smart ribbons set off her neatly arranged hair, and she presided behind her counter like a very attractive goddess of Ambrosia.

"There are no antiquities left except the old gateways," she pursued; "and they are so swallowed up in the modern element as to be hard to find and scarcely worth examining. Oh, they have carefully done their best to ruin the town. It was said at the time—before my time, naturally," with a complacent smile at her still youthful record—"it was said at the time that to demolish old walls and do away with all signs of antiquities was a fatal mistake, and so it has proved. No one ever comes here now, and if it were not for our exporting trade and our leather manufactures, Montélimar might put up its shutters and retire from business. The old Château?—well, monsieur, go up to it, and explore it—if you can. But there is a mystery about it. No one is ever admitted. Whether there is a lunatic in the place, or an unhappy prisoner languishing out his days in solitary confinement—like the Man with the Iron Mask at Villeneuve—no one knows: but mystery there is. Yes, monsieur, that is the way. Turn to the right, and up the hill and down the hill, and right and left again; then a walk of a mile and a half, until you come to great gates and an old grey tower—and there you are. Your purchases will be quite safe here till you return. *Au revoir*, messieurs."

And madame, with a polite bow, flourished back to her throne, and the procession resumed its meanderings through the streets.

We followed the road indicated, and presently found ourselves on the heights overlooking the town and surrounding country, through which flowed the rapid waters of the Rhône.

Onwards through a well-kept but undulating road, until

after about half an hour's walk we came to what was evidently the château of our search—the Château de Malvoisie. It exactly answered the description of the ambrosial goddess—the great gates, the grey tower.

We rang a peal at the bell: a loud sonorous peal that echoed upon the quiet air. After a moment's waiting, a small door in the larger gate opened as by magic; we passed in and it closed. No one was visible.

We found ourselves in a well-kept garden, where flowers still bloomed, in spite of the lateness of the season. Over-looking this garden was a long, grey, half-gabled, half-castellated house, apparently some four or five centuries old. We advanced, feeling ourselves almost intruders, yet wondering at this extreme solitude and stillness, this death-in-life atmosphere.

We went up the terrace steps towards the house. Large, mullioned, latticed-paned windows looked out upon the garden and the sky; in the centre of the house a great Gothic doorway was the only visible entrance. For this we made.

On approaching, a voice from the interior—some invisible but not far-off region—called out: “C'est bien vous, Adèle? Why have you tarried so long?”

Simultaneously with this there burst upon our startled ears the sound of a wild shriek of insane laughter, loud, prolonged, unearthly. More uncomfortable still, feeling more than ever that we were intruding where we were not wanted, we knocked at the door sharply.

“Ciel!” cried a startled voice. “Qui donc est là?”

The next moment a tall powerful woman appeared hurriedly upon the scene.

“Who are you?” she cried, in an angry, almost terrified voice. “What do you want, and how came you here?”

Then, possibly realising that we did not look exactly like burglars or midnight assassins, she added in calmer tones:

“Excuse me, messieurs, but I did not expect to see strangers here. I made sure it was the servant Adèle who rang, who has gone into the town for a commission, and ought to have been back half an hour ago. What may you want in these grounds where no strange foot ever penetrates?”

“We are strangers merely passing through,” we explained:

"great lovers of antiquities and ancient buildings, and having heard of the beauty of the Château de Malvoisie, came up to beg permission to inspect it. We rang, the door was opened, and we entered."

Again there broke out that wild and prolonged shriek of insane laughter, if possible louder and more unearthly than the previous one. Then there was a noise as though a whole field of artillery were crashing about our ears. Cannon balls seemed to be rolling about an upper floor, and to crash into each other. The woman turned pale and shivered, but it was more in anger and vexation than fear.

"The mischief is done," she said ; "the secret is out, as far as you are concerned. But if you are merely passing through the town, as you say, I charge you, on your honour, reveal nothing of what you have accidentally learnt ; especially as I am guilty of the carelessness of admitting you, and on me would fall the punishment. For at the present moment I am in charge of everything ; the family are away."

"Not a word shall pass our lips. We assure you that sacredly. But as we are here and know so much, may we not inspect the château ?"

The woman hesitated a moment, then took her decision.

"Since you are here, where you ought not to be," she said, with a grim smile, "and since you know so much, to see and know a little more can do no harm. *Du reste*, monsieur, I feel that I may trust you ; you will not abuse my confidence."

Once more, for the third time, came that startling prolonged shriek of insane laughter, mingling as it were with the rumbling of cannon balls. It was impossible to avoid the question : the woman's attitude and manner almost invited it.

"What does it mean ? Who is it ? Why are you shut up here alone with a madman ?"

"Three questions at once," returned the woman. "The first one you have yourself answered. It means madness. You cannot hear that wild laughter and doubt it. As to who it is—listen."

She murmured a name that made us start ; a name well-known in the world ; a name handed down in history from past generations ; a name powerful and honoured, though not in the

person of the unhappy maniac: only in his ancestors, and in those of his day and generation whose name he bore.

"I see you are surprised," said the woman. "Monsieur, there are secrets in many households, a skeleton in every cupboard. Here there is no disgrace, but it would be useless to say it is not a detriment. Therefore for the sake of the daughters who are yet to marry, the sad blot is kept secret from the world."

"But do the family ever come here?"

"Certainly, monsieur. All through every summer. One cannot keep up this expensive place and not use it."

"But how can they bear this—this affliction? If nothing is seen, at least they hear."

"No, monsieur, nothing is heard. Now that they are away, the poor unfortunate is brought down to larger rooms, where he has more freedom and can take more exercise. When they are here, he is consigned to the most distant rooms in the wing, with double doors and double windows. He might be a hundred leagues away."

"What is that sound, like distant thunder, or the rolling of cannon balls?"

"It is cannon balls. He is rolling them up and down the long passage, playing with his keeper; so you see, monsieur, I am not alone—to answer your third question. It is his favourite amusement. He enjoys the noise intensely; shrieks with laughter. The strange thing is that he never laughs at any other time. So when the family are here, his cannon balls are never given to him—and he is always quiet. Cruel? Not at all. If he had his cannon balls all the year round he would grow tired of them."

At this moment there came another peal at the bell, clashing in with the rolling of the cannon balls and the wild laughter of the maniac.

"Adèle at last," said the woman, going a few yards down the passage and pulling a handle. "But for her tardiness, monsieur, you would not be standing here. Neither king nor pope would have tempted me to admit you. But as I say, it is done, and you may as well now see all I can show you. *Du reste*, you are welcome."

The little door in the gate had opened, and in stepped Mademoiselle Adèle the delinquent, who closed the door sharply and advanced up the terrace, a basket on her arm.

On catching sight of us, she seemed to take in the situation of affairs intuitively; suddenly stood still as though her feet had become glued to the ground; then putting down her basket, fled down a side path as though a demon incarnate had been in pursuit.

"Adèle!" cried the woman in a voice that corresponded with her height and strength. "Adèle! come here. Of what are you thinking?"

The girl arrested her flying footsteps and turned.

"I am going for Paul," she called out.

"Come here at once and let Paul alone. Concern yourself with your own affairs. If I want Paul I can summon him without your help."

Slowly the girl turned up the path, took up her basket and passed in looking almost frightened to death.

"You may well look frightened," said the woman severely. "If you had come back at your time and not stayed to gossip, I should not have admitted these gentlemen. But having done so, go about your business, and leave the matter to me. Now, monsieur, I will show you some of the rooms of the château. You are here, and, as you say, it would be a pity to lose the sight of the treasures."

Treasures indeed. The rooms were large and lofty and of magnificent proportions. Some were hung with ancient tapestry we had never seen surpassed. Other walls were embellished with pictures by Raphael, Vandyck, Murillo, Rubens, and many another master. One room was given up to portraits by Largillière, Mignard, Rembrandt, Frank Hals, Mireveldt and others. Cabinets of priceless Sèvres and other china stood about. One room was entirely fitted up in the style of Louis XIV. with admirable effect.

"It is a perfect museum!" we exclaimed, after wandering about in a dream of the past. "There are treasures here that would buy up a whole province. To examine them properly one ought to spend days if not weeks within these walls. But what a charge for you," we added.

"I am quite equal to it," returned the woman with her grim smile. "Burglars don't come in battalions, and I should be sorry for any two or even three men who attempted a midnight escapade on the premises."

The look of calm determination with which she declaimed this spoke volumes for her courage. It would be a bold man indeed who tried to storm any fortress she commanded.

Having conducted us through these wonderful rooms, she proposed a turn in the garden. During the whole inspection we had had to listen every now and then to a shout of laughter and to the constant rolling of the artillery.

"If I had my way," said our guide once, after a prolonged burst, "I would never let the poor unfortunate have those cannon balls to play with. That laughter makes the very marrow freeze in my bones. Poor creature! What an existence—what a fate!"

"What brought it on?" we asked, seeing the woman more than willing to speak of the matter. "Is it hereditary?"

"Oh, no. It is the result of a terrible blow when he was seven years old. He fell out of window on his head, and that and the fright turned his brain. It is a thousand pities. He is tall and handsome; well made and well proportioned, with a fine head; and in his beautiful blue eyes you never see a trace of madness excepting when he plays with those miserable balls."

"How old is he?"

"He is twenty-one. There was some hope that about now he might regain his reason, but as yet I see no sign of it."

"They do wonders in these days," we observed. "It is quite possible that as the madness is the result of an accident, it is due to some pressure upon the brain. An operation might remove this, so that he would recover his reason. Doctors now perform almost miracles."

"Heaven grant it might be so," cried the woman fervently. "In spite of his madness, you cannot see the poor young man without having your heart drawn towards him. This very autumn, before M. de X——, his father, left for Paris (you should see the treasures of their hotel there, by the way!) he had a consultation with his doctor on this very subject: and

before long I believe it is decided to place the poor patient under some wonderful machine by which they can see into the very brain. Oh, monsieur, I hope the devil is not at the bottom of it all, but it does sound like conjuring or sorcery. To see inside a deal box without opening it really seems hardly Christian."

We went out into the garden, where, sheltered by walls twelve feet high, roses still bloomed upon the slopes. In summer it must have been very lovely, for it was laid out with care and taste, and a certain suspicion of untrained wildness in parts took from it all stiffness and formality. We certainly were well repaid for our perseverance, and profited largely by Adèle's love of gossip.

As we approached the gate, a final burst of insane laughter greeted us, but from here so muffled and subdued that it could not by any possibility penetrate beyond the walls.

The woman drew back the latch of the door, and we quietly endeavoured to reward her for so much complaisance on her part: but she shook her head.

"Ah, no, monsieur!" she said. "It was by mistake you were admitted, and I will accept no *douceur* for wrong-doing—or rather for carelessness; for it simply amounts to that. No one ever comes here. From Monday morning to Saturday night we are unmolested. I never dreamed of its being anyone but Adèle la bavarde. But don't think that I regret your visit. No harm has been done. I can trust you. In an hour or two you will have left Montélimar perhaps never to return: but if ever you do return, and I am here in possession, you will be welcome to visit the château again. I will admit you, and not by accident. *Au revoir, messieurs, et bon voyage!*"

The stern-looking but really amiable woman made us a bow, the door closed with a sharp sound, and the visit was over.

It may interest the reader to know that two years ago, when the birds were singing and all nature was springing into life, the contemplated operation was performed on this unfortunate patient. He was subjected to the X-rays, the seat of the mischief was plainly indicated, and an operation far

less difficult and dangerous than might have been anticipated, removed the evil. After it he stood clothed and in his right mind ; as sane as in the days before his accident.

But the young man of twenty-two was a child in intellect. Strangely enough, all he had known at the age of seven came back to him ; what he could read then, he could read now ; and as he thought and reasoned then, so he thought and reasoned now : a grown-up child and a very sad sight. Yet how far less sad and pitiable than the poor madman playing with his cannon balls and shrieking with wild laughter.

One of the tests after his recovery was to show him those cannon balls. He looked at them in surprise, asked what they were, had no knowledge of ever having seen them before. Trying to lift one he expressed astonishment at its weight. Then it was rolled over the floor and crashed against the further wall with rebounding noise. For one moment a vague expression of uneasiness flitted across his face, as though trying to remember some past passage in his life ; then turning to those about him : "What a detestable noise," he said. "Why do you make it ?"

But the child-mind was capable of education. Every day saw some slight change, some small advance. The intellect expanded with strange rapidity, as a flower opens to the sun. It was as though nature realised that she had to make up for lost time, and put forth all her powers of recovery. Step by step, the brain climbed upwards towards the standard of the man, and with every indication that by-and-by the intellect would become not only strong, but even gifted with some of that brilliancy that has made for his ancestors a name to conjure with in the world. So it has proved.

And the secret of the Château de Malvoisie is a secret no longer, we are absolved from our promise to be silent, and strangers are freely admitted to that wonderful collection of art treasures.

But to return to the day of our first visit. We passed away from our strange experience, feeling that a chapter of accidents had favoured us. This alone was repayment tenfold for having broken our journey at Montélimar. It was one of those

“circumstances of travel” that by their very unexpectedness are more than pleasant at the time and add a charm to the storehouse of one’s memory.

We made our way back into the town, for the grey shades of evening were falling; the plain and distant hills had become faint and indistinct in the twilight. In the long dull street—the Grande Rue—the lamps were already alight, and a little of the daylight gloom was dissipated.

We gathered up our boxes of nougat at the various “original establishments,” and H. C. declared he felt like a camel crossing the desert—heavily laden and parched with thirst. The little lively madame congratulated us on having obtained entrance to the Château de Malvoisie during the absence of the family. It was a rare favour, she declared, unknown at least in *her* day. How had we managed—and was there a mystery, as some people avowed?

We expatiated upon the beauties of the garden and the charms of the house, but of mystery said not a word. Madame wished us *bon voyage*, evidently under the impression that the mystery of the château existed only in people’s imagination: the outcome of bavardage and *mauvaises langues*. Had we not gone up, been admitted, inspected, and returned alive and well? It was clear as daylight.

On our way to the station, opposite the park, we passed a house on which was written in large letters: “The only existing manufactory of the true and original Nougat de Montélimar.” Our heavily-laden camel immediately arrested his steps, and no protest that we were already sufficiently supplied would induce him to pass the place.

“It is the very object with which we came here,” he said, “and it would be criminal not to inspect it. The others were mere shops: this is a manufactory. We shall effect a distinct saving by getting it at wholesale price. I will call myself a travelling confectioner, and show my camel’s hump consisting of sweetstuff by way of proof. But I think a camel has two humps, by the way? Is it the camel or the dromedary that has two humps? I always mix up those graceful creatures, with their swan-like necks and sylph-like legs. Well, I will lay in a second hump here.”

And without further parley, he walked into the establishment.

Another huge woman appeared upon the scene, but this time of distinctly forbidding aspect. She wore quite a beard and moustache, and was of swarthy complexion. Her hair was thick and black, her low forehead was further diminished by a scowl and creases : cross and horizontal bars, H. C. called them.

For a moment he looked as though he repented coming in and would beat a retreat, but it was too late ; the dragon was asking him what he wanted. She spoke in broken English—very broken, but intelligible. He took his courage in both hands.

“I want some nougat,” he said ; “at wholesale price. I am a travelling sweetstuff merchant, and entitled to privileges. I bring Rahat Lakoom from Turkey, Sherbet from Persia, and now require Nougat from Montélimar.”

“You a travelling merchant ?” said the dragon. “I don’t believe it ! You are much more like a Milor Anglais.” After all, blue blood will out : H. C.’s connection with Lady Maria could not be disguised. “Pray can you give me the pass-word in the nougat commerce ?” continued the dragon. “Ah ! I’ve got him there,” she muttered under her breath, with quite a savage gleam of triumph.

H. C. felt rather nonplussed ; hem’d, ha’d and hesitated ; then said :

“I am not acquainted with Montélimar and its cabalistic signs. I am only a camel crossing the Arabian desert—and will give you the pass-word in Arabic.”

Here he brought out a whole torrent of horrible Chinese, which sounded excessively like forbidden language ; and he would apparently have gone on for half an hour if the dragon had not stopped him.

“Enough !” she cried, alarmed and overpowered. “Enough ! If you don’t know the French pass-word, you evidently know something much worse. You shall have your nougat at wholesale price.”

So the bargain was struck, and H. C. had his way, and laid in a supply that has still to be exhausted. All this took up

a good deal of time, and when we left the only "original manufactory of nougat," darkness had fallen. The dragon accompanied us to the outer gate, and with a laugh that resembled the croaking of a crow more than anything else, said to H. C. :

"You may be a camel crossing the Arabian desert, and you may have all the Eastern languages at your finger-ends, but a merchant of confections you are not. You are a Milor Anglais. However, you have given me a wholesale order, and so I don't mind your having it at wholesale price. *Bon voyage, messieurs.*"

We had not seen one apparently decent hotel in the town ; they probably exist, but we did not come across them. At the station there was an excellent buffet, with table d'hôte at seven o'clock. Thither we repaired.

"Nature abhors a vacuum," said H. C., quoting the old proverb as though he had originated it on the spot. "I have eaten a great deal of nougat to-day, but I find that, whilst it is slightly upsetting, it is not sustaining. Also that visit to the old château rather exhausted one ; the wild laughter was a painful experience."

Arrived at the station, H. C. laid down his burdens, and ceased to be a camel à *deux bosses*. The buffet was empty, a long, well laid out table indicated that a crowd might be expected. We wondered whether the townspeople came here in a body and dined. The doubt was soon solved by the arrival of the Marseilles express, and the cry of the porters on the platform : "Vingt minutes d'arrêt." A stream poured into the buffet, and every seat was soon filled. Then followed that most uncivilised of human exhibitions—a hungry crowd at table, racing with time. For them the twenty minutes were too soon over, but the officials were inexorable. We were not in Spain, or Norway, or Wales, or any of those countries where trains wait the convenience of gossiping officials. Here not a minute's grace was allowed, and those who were not ready had to go *quand même*. The train puffed away towards Lyons.

Our own turn came presently, and we said good-bye to Montélimar without regret.

"We take away the best of it in these bales," said H. C., looking with fond affection at the piles of packed nougat. "I hope the influence of the dragon will not accompany our last purchase, and spoil its flavour. Did you notice how she quailed at my Chinese-Arabic? I believe she would have given us the nougat for nothing in order to get rid of us."

It was an intensely dark night. The stars had all suddenly gone in, there was no moon to be seen, thick clouds had rolled over the sky. No sooner had the train started than down came the rain as though it meant to drown the world. A violent gale of wind arose. The train hissed, steamed and struggled through it. We were in a perfect battle of the elements, and it really seemed that the train would lose.

Our destination for the night was Vienne, where we were due about eleven o'clock.

Much of the country we were passing through was historical and interesting, but in the darkness we had nothing but the names of the stations to guide us. The whole country is full of Roman antiquities. Nyons, with its ancient walls, and Die, with its eleventh century cathedral, are especially notable. This neighbourhood was much visited by Richelieu, and the splendid old Castle of Crest owed its downfall to him. A tower still remains to mark the ruin, overlooking the Gorge of the Drôme, not far from its confluence with the more lordly Rhône.

At St. Péray the influence was more modern; we were in the centre of the wine district, and the whole neighbourhood flourishes in consequence. The wine of St. Péray goes into all parts of France, and was specially recommended to us by the kindly and attentive Madame Ville at Avignon.

Then came Valence, ancient capital of the Drôme, historically mixed up with Diana of Poitiers, Cæsar Borgia, and in modern days the Prince of Monaco, who bears the title of Duke de Valence, specially created for Cæsar Borgia. Napoleon lived here for a time in 1785, when only an obscure lieutenant of artillery, dreaming of fame, though not of such fame and conquest as came to him ere long. The citadel built by Francis I. still exists, but only as a caserne. Internal wars have ceased, possibly never to revive.

Just before reaching La Roche, we crossed the lovely River Isère, which takes its course through the magnificent scenery of the Dauphiné. No river contributes more to the grandeur of the Rhône. It rises at the foot of the Little St. Bernard, and runs its deep dark course down the wonderful valley to which it gives its name, and at the end of which rises Mont Blanc, in all its snowy splendour. Hannibal is supposed to have ascended the Valley of the Isère when he crossed the Alps.

St. Péray lies at the foot of the rocks that stand out boldly as one approaches Valence; its vineyards bask in the sunshine of the plain, and the castle of Crussol effectively crowns the height. To-night all this was lost, but to us the whole neighbourhood is an old, old friend. Many picturesque objects attract the attention; many a ruin.

Near Tain the valley narrows to a pass, and the brown waters of the river rush between the rocks with furious haste. Close by is the vineyard where once grew the grapes for the famous Hermitage wine, now, alas, no more, owing to the phylloxera. But the vineyard still exists, and one day the famous wine will return. It is called l'ermitage, and here once upon a time, perhaps in the Middle Ages, perhaps long before, dwelt a St. Jerome or an Ignatius Loyola. All trace of his cell has disappeared, but the tradition remains, and keeps romance alive.

Not very far off rises Mont Pilat, highest point in the Cévennes. Almost under its very shadow lies St. Etienne, chief town of the Loire, the Black Country of this part of the world: where firearms are made and ribbons are woven, and factory chimneys send forth their volumes of smoke. The little river Furens runs through the place and turns the wheel of many a mill. The whole place is as black as smoke and coal can make it. At night the train rushes past furnace after furnace, sending forth huge devouring flames into the darkness. It resembles nothing so much as an inferno, but the effect is weird and picturesque. By day, nothing more depressing and uncivilised can be imagined; but it gives work to thousands of people, and so one wishes it well.

But we spoke of St. Etienne in an earlier chapter on the

memorable occasion of our visit to Le Puy, and perhaps have no business to resuscitate it in these later pages.

Thus journeying through the vineyards we could not see, and near the rivers whose tracks we could not follow, we approached the ancient town of Vienne. The rain which had come down in torrents, obligingly ceased, but the sky remained overcast.

It was quite eleven o'clock when we found ourselves on the platform; a cold, raw, damp night, as though winter had suddenly fallen upon us. Somehow, depression took possession of us: a presentiment that something was going wrong, and that here we should find no comfortable resting-place. Only that morning—it seemed a year ago—we had left Madame Ville's comfortable hotel at Avignon: here, something whispered to us, we should find the very opposite. Instinct, presentiment, second sight—call it what you will—suggested that we should even be in danger. What the feeling was, what the impression, it is impossible to describe. H. C. shivered visibly.

"What is it?" we asked. "Cold—or hunger—or sleepiness—or——"

"Nothing of all that," he interrupted. "It is presentiment. Let us get back into the train and go on to Lyons."

"And leave our luggage here," we returned. "It is registered for Vienne, remember. No, here we must remain, come what may. We too are full of presentiment, but at least we are prepared, and can be on our guard against the powers of darkness. The Hôtel du Nord is said to be good and comfortable."

But the omnibus of the hotel was not there. Some Society had come to the town and taken up every room. Consequently the hotel being full, it did not send to meet the train.

Check the first; beginning of the fulfilment of the presentiment.

But as a drowning man catches at a straw, hoping against hope, so we desired the ramshackle old omnibus that was in attendance to drive to the Nord. The conductor proceeded to do so without protesting, probably feeling sure that he had caught his hares.

Before long it stopped at the entrance where a blaze of light dazzled us as we went in and begged them to make room for us if it were only a cupboard.

"Monsieur," returned the landlord, "I have not as much room left as would accommodate a cat. We are full to overflowing, and *entre nous* I am myself going to sleep on the billiard-table. You have arrived at a most unfortunate moment, and 364 days out of the 365 this would not have happened."

"Where then can we get taken in?"

The landlord shrugged his shoulders. "I doubt if you will find rooms anywhere but at the *Hôtel du Paradis*."

"And that is a last resource?"

Another shrug of the shoulders.

"It is not for me to say, *monsieur*, but do not expect great things. The hotel has a bad, even a mysterious reputation. It has been said that people have been known to go in and never come out again. I know nothing about it; but this I do know: you will not roll upon velvet."

This was extremely cheering. Nothing could be better—for our presentiments.

As we went back to the omnibus, we thought of that night years ago, when, on arriving at Morlaix, the hotel could not take us in, and Madame Hellard had sent us streaming through the town at midnight with the unfortunate André, who was half dead with toothache and a swelled face. There they had finally made us shake-downs in the salon of the hotel; here we were less fortunate.

"At least it sounds well," said H. C., as we told the man to drive to the *Hôtel du Paradis*. "If it is only an earthly paradise, we shall be well off."

"Things sometimes go by contrary," we replied. "Our presentiments are coming true."

The rain had ceased, but the darkness was intense. The few gas-lamps flared with a melancholy glimmer, without even strength to cast a shadow upon the ground.

Presently, after rattling through what seemed an endless number of streets, but in reality were only five or six turnings, we entered a narrow, pitch-dark thoroughfare. Not even a

lamp glimmered. It might have been the entrance to some dark cavern, some horrible inferno, anything that suggested the opposite of paradise. Yet here in a few moments stopped the ramshackle vehicle, in front of a gateway from which no light issued.

In a moment the door of the omnibus was opened as though by invisible means, and we could just discern a waiter with a long white apron tied round him. Where he had sprung from was a mystery—down from the clouds or up from the earth. The gateway admitted into a small square courtyard, and through the windows of the house faint glimmerings of light might be seen, throwing pale reflections upon the courtyard pavement.

Inside the doorway stood a man who well matched the bearded lady at Montélimar. He must have measured at least six feet eight, and was broad and big in proportion. In the semi-obscurity all his proportions were exaggerated.

This was our host; the guardian of the Hôtel du Paradis; and looking upon him, we trembled for our lives. His countenance was ferocious; his eyes glittered; he seemed to look us through and through, as though taking the measure of what we were worth; he eyed the luggage greedily—as an eagle poised in the air might eye a lamb in a pasture—and seemed disappointed at its modest dimensions.

H. C. tried to put on his military bearing, but it would not do; he collapsed like an air cushion.

"We are in for it," he murmured, his face white and his knees trembling. "This is a modern Bluebeard; only instead of murdering his wives, he murders his guests. I daresay if we look long enough we shall find a secret cupboard with a dozen dangling skeletons."

"At any rate, if we are to be murdered we will die game," we observed. "You have your loaded stick, we have our revolver. Who knows? We might even win, and further the ends of justice."

"And we will keep together," added this modern Cæsar. "There is nothing like concentrating your forces on the field. Let us bargain for one room."

But this was found to be impossible. The giant declared

every room possessing two beds was occupied. He could, however, give us two rooms opening into each other, and with this we had to be content.

The mysterious waiter stood by ready to show us the way. His face was pale and cadaverous, as though he was half starved. His eyelids were heavy and red, his eyes had a peculiarly dreamy look about them, which might result from want of sleep or some abnormal condition of the brain. His hair was red, and looked as though it had not known brush or comb for many a long day. The candle he held in his hand lighted up his face to the point of weirdness. Somehow its expression, instead of suggesting murder and sudden death, had in it something pathetic. It excited our compassion; seemed to indicate a life that was by no means a bed of roses.

The ferocious giant—whose voice, however, was quiet enough—asked us if we would take anything before retiring: though it was so late that the fire was out in the kitchen, and the chef had gone to bed; nothing hot could be served. We were about to refuse everything, but H. C. interrupted us.

“Let us lay in a stock of Dutch courage,” he whispered, his face still white and his knees still trembling. “It may turn the balance of affairs.”

Looking at him, this seemed possible, so a syphon and a supply of cognac were ordered to be taken up. The giant wished us good night, and hoped we should sleep comfortably.

We hoped so too as we followed our guide through narrow and what seemed to be endless intricate passages full of unexpected turnings. A horrible smell crept through the house like a subtle evil agency. “A mixture of sulphur and gunpowder,” said H. C., looking utterly disgusted as well as uneasy. But this was fancy or prejudice. The fumes came up from the kitchen and smelt like bad soup.

“It is the fault of the cook,” said our curious guide, as he shuffled along with slippers down at heel; “he has left the *pot au feu* too full and too near a big fire—it has boiled over. Unfortunately it is difficult to get the smell out of the house.”

Still we went on turning and ascending.

“Where are you taking us to?” we cried sternly. “Is there no end to this place?”

"En vérité, monsieur, it is a straggling house. I have heard that it was a convent in days gone by, and these passages were made long and complicated so that the nuns could conceal themselves in case of a rising in the town or country. In those old days, *ma foi*, nothing was sacred; not even cloistered nuns, devoting their lives to prayer and good works. *Nous voilà!*"

It was time. Our pilgrimage through the passages had not increased our respect for the inn. Some of the floors were carpetless; on others the carpets looked as though they had not been disturbed for a century. Our rooms were not much better: cold, cheerless, and not very clean. The man lighted candles, then went back for the luggage.

The rooms were close and stuffy; we opened a window. As we did so the clock struck midnight; twelve sonorous strokes that vibrated slowly and solemnly upon the dark night air. It was the cathedral clock, which seemed to lead the way in the world of time, for other clocks followed in its wake.

"The witching hour," said H. C. "If there are ghosts here, they ought to begin to walk. I would rather have to do with them than with midnight assassins."

The waiter returned with the luggage, out of breath with his efforts; then a third time appeared with H. C.'s elements of Dutch courage—and retired for the night, looking, poor wretch, at the last point of exhaustion. His slipshod feet went shuffling down the passage, and were soon lost in the distance.

"He hardly seems to have energy or pluck to commit a murder," said H. C. "But probably the giant does that part of the business, and the man merely hangs up the dead bodies on the pegs in the closet—a long row of them. Shall we make a secret raid on the house and institute a search for sliding panels?"

"Wiser to go to bed. Secure our own lives as far as we can, and leave others to their fate. It has been a fairly tiring day since we left Avignon."

"In that case," said H. C., "here goes for Dutch courage."

And pouring himself out a liberal supply of cognac, with a trembling hand, with a strictly limited proportion of soda-water, he proceeded to undress and retire, and ten minutes

afterwards was sleeping as soundly as if cold-blooded murderers and midnight assassins had gone out with the last century. H. C. had, apparently in all ignorance, taken possession of the inner room, leaving us to bear the brunt of anything that might happen.

We tried to lock our door, but it would not lock, and bolt there was none. This was suspicious, but beyond remedy. All we could do was to place a chair close to the door, so that if anyone attempted to come in we might receive some sort of warning, the intruder a slight check. Then we too sought our couch, and in spite of a fixed determination to keep awake, very soon fell fast asleep.

It seemed that we had slept for about five minutes—but in reality it was past three in the morning—when we suddenly awoke with a start.

In the first moment we could not tell what had disturbed our slumber. We had a feeling of not being alone in the room, yet nothing was to be seen or heard. In vain we raised our head from the pillow and peered into the darkness. Absolute stillness and silence, apparently absolute vacancy.

Now thoroughly aroused, we listened. Soon we thought we heard stealthy, muffled footsteps approaching. Never moving, scarcely daring to breathe, we listened. Before long we distinctly heard a hand placed upon the knob of the door—and this was an unusual thing: that there should be a handle, and that the key was missing. We distinctly heard the hand placed upon the knob—for under such circumstances the hearing, strained to the point of tension, is unusually acute. Then the handle was turned, the door slowly, very slowly, opened. The chair, after all, seemed little or no obstruction. As the door opened a faint glimmer of light entered the room, slightly diminishing the obscurity.

It would be useless to confess that our heart did not beat more quickly than usual. What was behind that slowly-opening door? The giant landlord with murder gleaming in his eyes? Would it be a struggle for life—a hand-to-hand fight? Were we destined never to leave that room alive? Should we become another of those mysterious disappearances, and never be heard of again? How could we be traced? No

one knew of our intention to stop at Vienne. We should pass away and leave no sign.

A thousand thoughts and possibilities passed through our mind as we breathlessly watched the door.

It opened in a maddeningly deliberate manner: about an inch to the minute, reminding one of the horrors of those old tortures—the slowly-contracting chamber walls—the slowly-descending pendulum. From the position of our bed we could not see what was on the other side of the door until it stood nearly wide.

At length, after what seemed hours of suspense, the propeller stood disclosed.

It was not the giant landlord with murder gleaming in his eyes. We had evidently done him an injustice; he was no doubt at that moment sleeping the sleep of the just. The apparition was nothing more or less than the red-haired waiter with the pathetic expression. But it was a vision terrible and startling enough.

He was dressed in night attire. In his hand he carried a sort of lighthouse arrangement in which was a night-light. This it was that threw the gleam around, making still more visible the obscurity of the chamber. His face lighted up by this gleam looked worn and ghastly. The eyes were wide open, staring vacantly into distance. It was evident that the man was a sleep-walker, and neither a burglar nor an assassin.

What was to be done? We had heard that to awaken anyone in their sleep often bore fatal results. Again we had heard that it frequently had the exactly opposite effect, and to arouse a sleep-walker with a start was to break the chain that bound them, and cure them for ever of the unhappy propensity.

In a moment something seemed to impel us to action: the decision seemed taken out of our hands: we obeyed a resistless impulse. Close to us was a small revolver. We took it up quietly, extracted the ball from one of the cartridges, put the cartridge back in the chamber, and fired.

In the stillness of the night it made a loud, startling noise. H. C. in the next room woke up and tumbled out of bed with fright. Crash went the lighthouse in the hands of the waiter. The man woke with a start, and fell to the ground with a shout.

"I am shot," he cried; "I am lost! What does it mean? Where am I?"

All was confusion. In less than a moment we had lighted our candle, and advanced to the rescue of the sleep-walker who was more frightened than hurt.

The scene was a striking one. The man, seeing us advance, raised himself to a kneeling posture and begged for mercy. As he had not wilfully transgressed, it was more a case for pity and compassion. H. C. appeared at his door, ghostlike as to garments, and with a face the colour of alabaster. All his Dutch courage had evaporated, and if we had not called out sharply, we should have been mistaken for an assassin, and received a fracture of the skull.

Explanations followed. The man was aware of his failing, but had never been wakened in his sleep-walking, and never knew when it took place, or where he went. He could only explain his presence in our room in preference to anyone else's room by supposing that the lateness of our arrival and the three journeys he had taken—first with ourselves, then with the luggage, and finally with the mixture for Dutch courage—had so impressed him that in his sleep he unconsciously took the same direction.

This seemed a probable and common-sense view of the matter. We insisted upon his taking some cognac—which, however, required no great powers of persuasion to get down—and then sent him back to his own quarters, minus the broken lighthouse.

As he departed, we noticed that the dreamy and peculiar expression of the eyes was no longer there. Had the start effectually and indeed cured him of his dangerous sleep-walking habit? If so, he would owe us a debt of gratitude for the rest of his life.

Peace once more reigned. We were so far off from other inhabited rooms that the shot had disturbed no one. H. C. helped himself to an extra dose of Dutch courage, and returned to his couch. The cathedral clock struck four, and we heard and knew no more until at eight o'clock we were aroused by our midnight intruder bringing in hot water.

But what a change in his appearance! He was neatly

dressed; his hair was brushed; he was no longer down at heel; the expression of his face was quite vivacious; the eyes were no longer dreaming; he moved with alacrity.

"Ah, monsieur," he said, "you have done me a service. I feel this morning as I have not felt for ten years. Something seems to have snapped in my head; a chain that bound me, or something of that sort. I feel clear and full of life and energy, instead of, as before, always wanting to go to sleep. Never again, I firmly believe, shall I be a somnambulist."

It really seemed probable, for when we went down to our coffee and rolls he was flying about the place with activity enough for half a dozen. The dreamy look in his eyes had departed once for all—one felt sure of this. Our giant landlord, we noticed, looked at him in amazement, unable to understand the transformation.

We observed, too, that the ferocious and murderous expression we had seen last night on the latter, was this morning altogether absent. Had we after all misjudged him? fancied what did not exist? To-day, in a clear, healthy light, he might have been described as an amiable elephant. True, paradise and elephants seemed to have very little in common, but that was only another example of the eternal unfitness of things mundane. His proportions were in no way diminished; he still looked, and was, colossal, but he moved about with a soft tread, he spoke to us in quiet tones, and he was as far as possible removed from one's ideas of the midnight assassin. If only he had introduced cleanliness into his hotel there would have been little to find fault with.

As it was, we hurried over breakfast, and escaped into the town. Unfortunately our usual accompaniment of sunshine and blue skies had forsaken us. The clouds were lowering, and every now and then came down in drenching showers.

In spite of this, we found the town one of the most remarkable on the banks of the Rhône: still worthy in many ways its ancient pedigree. Too many of these old towns have lost all trace of the past; everything beautiful, artistic and old-world has disappeared under modern exactions: in Vienne much remained that was in the highest degree interesting.

Its situation is highly favoured. It lies on the slopes of

a small, fertile valley, through which the Rhône takes its course. The hills, right and left, are crowned by ruined castles belonging to the Middle Ages. On one of them the Romans had a fortified camp from which they surveyed the neighbouring country and commanded the pass.

Vienne is one of the oldest towns in France, was the chief town of the *Allobroges*; with which the flourishing Lyons of to-day is a mere infant in comparison. It was a place of note in the days of the *Cæsars*: and Hannibal is said to have left the Rhône at Vienne when crossing the Alps. It possesses the distinction of having been the cradle of Christianity in the West: and the Epistle of its early martyrs, addressed to the Church in the East, is almost worthy of a place in the *Apocrypha*. In the fifth century it was the capital of Burgundy which had raised itself to the rank of a kingdom. Later on it became the residence of the *Dauphins*. It was once an archbishopric, possessed of great power and influence: and it was here that the famous Ecclesiastical Council was held by Pope Clement V. and Philippe le Bel, condemning the Order of the Templars, whom they had begun to fear.

As we wandered through the streets, lamenting the deluge that too often came down, we were constantly arrested by wonderful traces of antiquity. Ancient houses and outlines almost unspoiled delighted us. In this respect, no town we had seen of late could compare with it. Other towns had more important Roman remains; Avignon had its palace of the popes; Nîmes its Roman baths; Gard its aqueduct; Arles its amphitheatre; but Vienne, without these special distinctions was full of scattered merits.

And yet it was not without traces of Roman occupation the very first of which we discovered in a Corinthian temple dedicated to Augustus and Livia. It stood in a small square and reminded one of the *Maison Carrée* at Nîmes, but was less perfect, having been altered and damaged in the Middle Ages by its conversion into a church. The damage, as far as possible, was undone and the building restored to its original design, but its ancient splendour had gone for ever.

There are many other Roman traces. A double arcade, with pillars, which is probably part of the ancient Forum; fragments

of a Roman theatre amidst the vineyards that fertilize the slopes of Mont Pipet just outside the town; and just above them, the remains of a Roman Castle.

But it is in remains of a less remote date that Vienne is specially interesting. In its out-of-the-way nooks and corners, where you come unexpectedly upon ancient buildings, gabled and turreted houses, remnants of the Middle Ages, with dormer windows and latticed panes, and dark-red slanting roofs,

The west front of the cathedral was grand and imposing, standing within a few yards of the flowing Rhône. It is rich in flamboyant decoration, and rises majestically above its broad flight of steps, seeming even older than it is. It looks, and is, perishing, the stone of which it is built yielding to the influence of time; but as yet the hand of the restorer has not spoilt it, and it may still be seen in all the beauty of crumbling decay. But not time alone is answerable for this. In 1562 it was much damaged by the Huguenot soldiers, almost at the very commencement of its career. For it was completed in the early part of the sixteenth century, though the cathedral was begun at a much earlier date. Above the west front rise the massive towers.

Immediately facing the cathedral is the long bridge by which one crosses the Rhône to the suburb of St. Colombe, chiefly interesting for its Tour de Mauconseil, from which, says tradition, Pilate threw himself in his agonies of disease and remorse. This, however, is more than Apocryphal, as the tower only dates back to the days of Philippe of Valois. It is the only point of interest in St. Colombe, and having inspected it, one gladly returns to the more lively streets of Vienne.

Yet these are for the most part narrow, winding and dirty, steep and badly paved: and if they are dirty on ordinary occasions they were still more so to-day under the weeping skies. It was impossible to do justice to and thoroughly appreciate the domestic architecture of the place; those points of antiquity that surprised us with their charm: whilst the uncomfortable hotel made us feel more or less homeless and houseless in the country.

We were glad when the hour came for departure, and we were able to turn our back on the Hôtel du Paradis, the amiable

elephant, and invigorated waiter. The latter was as ubiquitous and energetic at midday as he had been in the early morning; and the landlord's eyes still followed him with signs of wonder and uneasiness.

"I don't know what to make of him," he remarked, as the man flew up the passages for our luggage. "He has always been so sleepy and sluggish that regularly once a week for the last five years I have threatened him with dismissal. But to-day it is just as if he was being driven by a galvanic battery. He has been rushing about like a fire engine, turning the whole place upside down, and really doing the work of half-a-dozen. I fear he has caught a fever, and by-and-by the raving stage will come on."

Yet the man looked sane enough as he re-appeared with his hands full of baggage, and half-a-dozen things over his shoulders that H. C. had omitted to pack: and when he put his head in at the omnibus door—no longer a tangled mass of red hair, but a civilised arrangement parted down the middle—and thanked us fervently for the good we had done him, his eyes were as clear and sane and free from fever as the most convalescent patient could have desired.

We felt a conviction the change was not temporary but would last; and though we have heard nothing since then of Vienne the Hôtel du Paradis, or the giant host, it is borne in upon us that the red-haired waiter still reigns there, the dirty passages and bedrooms have become clean and cheerful, and under the new *régime* the once uncomfortable and more than doubtful inn is fast becoming popular and frequented.

But the afternoon that we left all this reformation was in the future, and we were not at all sorry when the ramshackle old omnibus rattled out of the narrow, dismal street and turned towards the station. After all, nothing had happened of any serious description.

"What about our presentiments?" we asked of H. C., whom the omnibus was fast reducing to a jelly.

"Absolutely fulfilled," he replied. "They were sent to us as a warning, and as such they served, putting us on the defensive. But for them we might have slept as soundly as moles in the winter. Nothing would have aroused us; and the sleep-walker

not accountable for his actions, would have murdered us both and comfortably gone back to bed. I have not the smallest doubt but this would have been the end of the adventure—a very bad end for us, I must say. If everyone would pay equal attention to his presentiments, I believe that an immense number of evils would be averted.”

“We wonder what your next presentiment will be?” we said, amused at H. C.’s adroitness in turning events to suit his purpose.

“I had one this morning,” he replied. “It came to me when I was in a state between sleeping and waking. In fact I hardly know whether it was a presentiment or a vision.”

“What was its nature?”

“Most agreeable. But you know presentiments may be agreeable as well as the opposite. They don’t all portend misfortune.”

“Pray what was yours of this morning?”

“It was that I shortly become engaged,” he replied blushing. “And if ever I had any doubts about matrimony, I have none now. I am convinced that it is the only perfect state of existence on earth.”

“Do you think the name of the hotel had anything to do with your vision?”

“I don’t know,” he replied. “I only know that since this morning I have felt plunged in paradise.”

“In fact the seventh heaven of bliss?”

“The seventieth,” he modestly replied: and would no doubt have added more, but the omnibus lurched round a corner and upset him.

We should not have referred to this incident, but that by a strange coincidence, H. C.’s presentiment or vision actually came true very shortly after his return to England. We received a letter from him one morning announcing the fact which had made him the happiest man on earth, and declaring that foreign countries would know him no more. Lady Maria had offered him a suite of rooms in her house in Mayfair, where he intended to take up his abode. His wanderings he said were over; and thus it seems probable that as far as we are concerned H. C. has made “his last appearance on any stage.”

The next moment we were at the station, and before long were steaming away towards Lyons.

We were going back to old quarters; and all the beauty of many days and all the romance seemed over. It was a farewell to the lovely and most attractive Valley of the Rhône. Nowhere else shall we find so many Roman and antiquarian remains combined with much that is historically interesting and beautiful in nature. Through all, the splendid river takes its course, and the music of its waters is never far off. In commonplace Lyons, given over to commerce, manufacture, and all the prosy elements of modern life, we should still have the river to remind us of the romantic spots through which it flowed; but here its music would be drowned by the clatter of machinery and the rush of men going to and fro in their race for wealth.

"After all," said H. C., quoting a wise if homely proverb, "we cannot have our cake and eat it too. I really think this late experience has been the most delightful and sunny of my whole life. Even Majorca was only better than this in that it lasted longer. It was not more full of delightful surprises and perfect sensations."

Of course he was under the influence of his early morning vision, which had converted him from a possible misogynist to a strong matrimonial maniac. He naturally saw everything *couleur de rose*. It was a good thing our travels were over, for he would have become a very dreamy and silent companion.

But for our own part, when the train steamed into Perrache, and for us the Lower Valley of the Rhône was, at any rate for some time to come, a thing of the past, we fell into a melancholy musing. And that night, as, in the quietness of our chamber and the stillness of the small hours, one scene after another passed before us, we felt that even without vision of matrimony, or presentiment of bliss, or seventieth heaven of delight, there lies a charm and a beauty amidst the hills and valleys and plains watered by that wonderful stream that few other rivers can boast, and fewer still excel.

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